

Biblical Catholic Answers for John Calvin

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For related reading on the author's blog, see the following web page:

John Calvin, Calvinism, and General Protestantism

<http://socrates58.blogspot.com/2006/11/calvin-calvinism-index-page.html>

DEDICATION

To my Reformed Protestant brothers and sisters in Christ, for whom I have a great deal of respect. May we rejoice in the common ground that we have, and be cordially open and honest with each other, as fellow Christians, when we disagree

INTRODUCTION

For quite a while now, I've desired to make an in-depth, point-by-point reply to large portions of John Calvin's monumentally influential work of systematic theology, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Calvin is, quite arguably, the most articulate and "meaty" Protestant theologian, and certainly one of the most systematic.

I've done a great deal of research on Martin Luther, so it is long overdue for me (as a Catholic apologist) to start paying relatively more attention to the other important figure in the Protestant Revolt: John Calvin. In many ways, Calvin has had even more influence in the subsequent history of Protestantism than Luther himself. Much of Calvin's subject matter in his famous tome gets to the heart—the very crux—of the disagreement between Catholics and Protestants.

I'll be utilizing for my purposes, the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, translated by Henry Beveridge for the Calvin Translation Society in 1845, from the 1559 edition in Latin; reprinted by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company (Grand Rapids, Michigan), 1995, and available online at the wonderful Christian Classics Ethereal Library site:

<http://www.ccel.org/c/calvin/institutes/institutes.html>

This work is in the public domain because of its age. That being the case, I was able to easily cut and paste everything in it, without a great deal of extra typing being necessary. This allowed me to easily reply in my preferred socratic manner, and to go "back and forth" with Calvin.

My biggest interest lies in Book IV: *Of the Holy Catholic Church*. It runs about 500 pages. This is where the real contrast between Calvinism and Catholicism is most evident, in my opinion: even more than in soteriology, or the theology of salvation (Book III), where the two sides are far closer than many in both parties (including John Calvin himself) realize. I like to go right to the heart of any given issue, and that's located here, in my opinion.

In the much longer online version of my replies (entries listed on my *Calvin and Calvinism* web page, noted on the copyright page above), I

responded line-by-line to the entirety of Book IV of the *Institutes*. For my purposes in this book, and for the convenience of reference, I have edited, abridged, and reorganized that material, and have added additional related replies of mine having to do with John Calvin.

Calvin, of course, has the big advantage going in, in such a “debate.” He’s the famous and extremely influential theologian and scholar, with lots of formal education, rhetorical and literary ability in droves, and a remarkable encyclopedic knowledge in many areas. I’m just a lay Catholic apologist with a degree in sociology, and no formal theological education (but with lots of informal theological education for over thirty years).

I rather like that. I love to play David over against a “Goliath.” I relish the challenge, and this was assuredly one that took a *lot* of effort and very hard work on my part: with intense research often required. Calvin can’t counter-respond, but such is the necessary disadvantage of being dead for almost 450 years. Calvin’s superior education makes up for his deceased status.

If it is concluded that I prevail here and there in my replies, then it will bring (all the more) the point home that, as we believe, Calvin was wrong in his arguments, where he opposed the Catholic Church. I’m confident that he has been, throughout my replies, very often plainly shown to be in error. I’ve often noted that one may be the greatest genius of all time, but if the facts and the truth are not on one’s side, even an infant who knows the truth can “get the better of them” in discussion.

I gave it my best shot. You, the reader, are the judge and jury. *You* can and should decide where the truth lies. Read and consider Calvin’s arguments and then ponder the replies that this one orthodox Catholic gives, and make up your own mind. I have always advocated the process of reading two opposing arguments and then deciding which one is more plausible; which has the “ring of truth” to it.

In conclusion, I would like to respond to objections I have already heard, even before this book was published. A few (minority anti-Catholic type) Reformed Protestants, familiar with my apologetic work and highly critical of it, have questioned whether I am qualified at all to undertake such a project as this.

My response has been twofold. I stated, first of all, that if I were as profoundly ignorant and underinformed and unqualified as they made out,

then Calvinists had nothing whatever to fear from this book, or the larger set of online replies, as they would be their own refutation, and self-evidently absurd.

Their very protest, then, seemed to suggest that they feared such a reply far more than their words were letting on. Why worry about it? I can do no harm to their cause if they are correct about my alleged utter lack of qualifications.

The second defense I made was to appeal to Calvin's *own* claims for his work, and its intended audience. It was not supposed to be for scholars and theologians only, but rather, primarily for students and laymen (just as St. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* was intended as introductory instruction). He expresses this in several introductory comments to *The Institutes*. For example:

My intention was only to furnish a kind of rudiments, by which those who feel some interest in religion might be trained to true godliness.... in a simple and elementary form adapted for instruction.... what I have here given may be regarded as a summary ...

(*Prefatory Address*, Basle, 1536)

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes.ii.viii.html>

[M]y object in this work was to prepare and train students of theology for the study of the Sacred Volume, so that they might both have an easy introduction to it, and be able to proceed in it, with unfaltering step, seeing I have endeavoured to give such a summary of religion in all its parts, and have digested it into such an order as may make it not difficult for any one, who is rightly acquainted with it, to ascertain both what he ought principally to look for in Scripture, and also to what head he ought to refer whatever is contained in it.

(*Prefatory Epistle to the Reader*, 2nd edition, Strasbourg, 1539)

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes.ii.ix.html>

[I]t is the duty of those who have received from God more light than others to assist the simple in this matter, and, as it were, lend them their hand to guide and assist them in finding the sum of what God has been pleased to teach us in his word.... it will be a kind of key opening up to

all the children of God a right and ready access to the understanding of the sacred volume.... a summary of Christian doctrine, ... an introduction to the profitable reading both of the Old and New Testament.

(*Subject of the Present Work*, French edition, Geneva, 1545)

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes.ii.x.html>

Now, if we are dealing with an introductory work written to the masses (not scholars and academics): for folks just starting to get acquainted with Scripture, then certainly it is not out of bounds for a non-scholar apologist like myself, with over thirty years of experience of intense study of theology and Scripture, to undertake a popular-level critique of the popular-level introductory work.

Calvin is far more *qualified* than I am, as I freely concede, but it is *not* the case that no non-scholar can ever deign to reply to him or that we have no relevant or substantive replies, merely by the fact of our lesser formal academic achievements.

No law or rule can be found that would forbid me from doing this, or entail that this endeavor ought to be defined as having “no concept” of my “limitations,” as one of my critics put it, or, “an exercise in self-conceited charlatanry,” as another delightfully opined.

This is, sadly, how the academic snob views most popular analyses, written for the masses and the proverbial “common man,” rather than merely to academics and pointy-headed “intellectuals.” Neither of these men, however (ironically), are actually academics *themselves*. One is a teaching assistant and the other is still trying, in his late thirties, to obtain a graduate degree.

Both have been very active on the Internet for years (a “popular” medium if there ever was one), since that has been the only way they could be read *at all* (neither having had a book published by reputable publishers, as I have, six times now). They seem to believe that the only people who can think and analyze and critique are scholars and professors. Yet they write such analyses all the time, and are scarcely more qualified than I am (if not less) to do so.

In a lighthearted vein, I consider this book a gift to John Calvin, on the occasion of his 500th birthday (he was born in 1509). The actual writing (apart from a portion of this Introduction) was finished in December 2009 (I met the “deadline”!), and was merely edited in 2010.

The Institutes is widely used to this day. Since it is so critical of Catholicism, it needs to be answered from a Catholic perspective. I have tried to keep polemics to a bare minimum. That was assuredly somewhat difficult, because Calvin is often *highly* provocative and polemical: plain insulting; but my goal was to stick to rational arguments from Scripture and history.

I hope my reply is helpful for readers who seek to understand the difference between the two theological systems and competing claims. May God the Holy Spirit, our Helper, guide us all into all truth, and grant us the will, by His grace, to want to always seek truth.

PART ONE: CRITICISM

Chapter One

I. Ecclesiology (Theology of the Church and Church Government)

1. The Catholic Church vs. the Bible?

And that my readers may the better understand the hinge on which the question chiefly turns, I will briefly explain what our opponents demand, and what we resist. When they deny that the Church can err, their end and meaning are to this effect: Since the Church is governed by the Spirit of God, she can walk safely without the word; in whatever direction she moves, she cannot think or speak anything but the truth, and hence, if she determines anything without or beside the word of God, it must be regarded in no other light than if it were a divine oracle. If we grant the first point—viz. that the Church cannot err in things necessary to salvation—our meaning is, that she cannot err, because she has altogether discarded her own wisdom, and submits to the teaching of the Holy Spirit through the word of God. Here then is the difference. They place the authority of the Church without the word of God; we annex it to the word, and allow it not to be separated from it.... He forbade that anything should be added to his word, and that anything should be taken from it. This is the inviolable decree of God and the Holy Spirit, a decree which our opponents endeavour to annul when they pretend that the Church is guided by the Spirit without the word. (IV, 8:13)

... the ministers of Satan, whose usual practice is to hold the Scriptures in derision, ... (IV, 17:48)

The Catholic Church doesn't create dogmas with utter disregard for Scripture (quite the contrary). Calvin fails to document what he charges. We make no such dichotomy. Calvin does because he thinks in "either/or" terms: for him, if there is true Church authority, this must somehow

inexorably be opposed to Scripture in some essential fashion. It's simply not true.

Every child knows that in the writings of the apostles, which these men represent as mutilated and incomplete, is contained the result of that revelation which the Lord then promised to them. (IV, 8:14)

Catholics do not do this. Scripture often points to traditions outside of itself that are true. Therefore, to hold such a view is not to hold to a "mutilated and incomplete" Bible. It is to hold to *all that the Bible itself asserts*. The one who denies that there is such a thing as a tradition described and fully accepted in Scripture, is selectively disbelieving part of that same Scripture. It isn't being accepted in its totality.

At present I only reply in one word, that our Saviour's promise is made to those only who assemble in his name. How, then, is such an assembly to be defined? I deny that those assemble in the name of Christ who, disregarding his command by which he forbids anything to be added to the word of God or taken from it, determine everything at their own pleasure, who, not contented with the oracles of Scripture, that is, with the only rule of perfect wisdom, devise some novelty out of their own head (Deut. 4:2; Rev. 22:18)... Let my opponents solve this difficulty if they would subject my faith to the decrees of man, without authority from the word of God. (IV, 9:2)

This is circular reasoning:

1. Catholics declare doctrine X that I (Calvin) disagree with.
2. Doctrine X is unscriptural.
3. Why is X unscriptural? Because I disagree that it is.
4. I know my interpretation is correct because it disagrees with the Roman interpretation, which is a tradition of men, because it is a novelty devised out of their heads, rather than from Scripture.

The circularity can be demonstrated in a number of other ways, too. Obviously, both sides *claim* scriptural support. The argument has to be an exegetical one, as opposed to a "your dad's uglier than mine" level. It is

simply not the case that Catholics ignore Scripture in setting forth their theological views (agree or disagree), as Calvin would have it.

But the Romanists have another end in view when they say that the power of interpreting Scripture belongs to councils, and that without challenge. For they employ it as a pretext for giving the name of an interpretation of Scripture to everything which is determined in councils. Of purgatory, the intercession of saints, and auricular confession, and the like, not one syllable can be found in Scripture. But as all these have been sanctioned by the authority of the Church, or, to speak more correctly, have been received by opinion and practice, every one of them is to be held as an interpretation of Scripture. And not only so, but whatever a council has determined against Scripture is to have the name of an interpretation. (IV, 9:14)

Individuals can far more easily (wrongly) declare that their view is the “biblical” one. Calvin does this all the time. I do it myself (most people who do any theology at all, do it), but the difference is that we Catholics submit our judgments to that of the Church, and where we differ from the Church, we submit to her, even if we may not always fully understand.

2. Denigration of Tradition

Moreover, the worst of all is, that when once religion begins to be composed of such vain fictions, the perversion is immediately succeeded by the abominable depravity with which our Lord upbraids the Pharisees of making the commandment of God void through their traditions (Mt. 15:3). (IV, 10:10)

That has to be analyzed more closely, because Jesus also observed Pharisaical traditions (the true ones), and Paul called himself a Pharisee (in Scripture) three times (Acts 23:6; 26:5; Phil 3:5). There are true and false traditions. Protestants too often condemn all “traditions,” as if they have none, and as if there are no true traditions described and sanctioned in Holy Scripture.

What is meant by making the word of God void by tradition, if this is not done when recommending the ordinances of God only frigidly and

perfunctorily, they nevertheless studiously and anxiously urge strict obedience to their own ordinances, as if the whole power of piety was contained in them; (IV, 10:10)

To the extent that promulgation of Church laws and divine laws were done in this legalistic, loveless fashion, sin occurred, just as Jesus condemned the Pharisees for their similar hypocrisy and rigid legalism and misplaced emphases (in Matthew 23). But Jesus also upheld the fundamental *authority* of the Pharisees in the early part of the chapter, just before he condemned their hypocrisy *in practice*.

Therefore, the presence of hypocrisy (excessive rigidity, legalism, lack of love, etc.), does not in and of itself prove that the laws themselves are invalid, or that the authorities who proclaim them are no authorities at all. Jesus taught this (not just Catholics, later on). We are not at liberty to disagree with Him. Many are prone to the legalistic sins of Pharisaism in its worst sense. That is not by any means confined to Catholics; nor does it disprove any Catholic belief.

3. Denial of Apostolic Succession

Here, then, is the value of succession when not conjoined with imitation and corresponding conduct: posterity, as soon as they are convicted of having revolted from their origin, are deprived of all honour; unless, indeed, we are prepared to say, that because Caiaphas succeeded many pious priests (nay, the series from Aaron to him was continuous), that accursed assembly deserved the name of Church. (IV, 2:3)

If there was no sense whatever in which the Jewish people could be a “Church” in primitive form, why, then, did Jesus tell His followers to follow the teaching of the Pharisees (though not their conduct: Matthew 23:2–3), because they sat on “Moses’ seat”? Why did St. Paul show respect to the high priest, even when he was on trial (Acts 23:4–5)? Why was Paul still worshipping and *even presiding over* the services in synagogues (Acts 13:13–44)?

Acts 3:1 informs us that Peter and John were worshipping at the temple, during the ninth hour. The notes in my Revised Standard Version Bible

explain that the ninth hour was 3 PM “when sacrifice was offered with prayer (Ex 29:39; Lev. 6:20; Josephus, *Ant.* xiv.4.3).”

Acts 2:46 described the early Christians as “day by day, attending the temple together.” This would have certainly included St. Paul, too, when he was in Jerusalem, and he himself alludes to his presence in the temple as well as synagogues (Acts 24:12), and is described as continuing to participate in temple rituals: “Then Paul took the men, and the next day he purified himself with them and went into the temple, to give notice when the days of purification would be fulfilled and the offering presented for every one of them” (Acts 21:26; cf. 25:8: “Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended at all”).

In Acts 22:7 he refers to his practice of “praying in the temple,” and in Acts 24:18 as having been “purified in the temple” (cf. 24:17: “I came to bring to my nation alms and offerings”).

Even in earthly governments, no one would bear to see the tyranny of Caligula, Nero, Heliogabalus, and the like, described as the true condition of a republic, because they succeeded such men as Brutus, Scipio, and Camillus. That in the government of the Church especially, nothing is more absurd than to disregard doctrine, and place succession in persons. (IV, 2:3)

No one is disregarding doctrine; Catholics and Protestants disagree on some doctrines, of course. But (to be honest and frank) Catholics have history on their side; Protestants do not (in cases where we differ). As for succession, that is a biblical doctrine, which we are not at liberty to reject. A scriptural argument can be made even for papal succession. Here is how it might proceed:

Only Peter was given the keys of the kingdom, and this had a whole history of thought behind it. Basically it meant that he was the supervisor of the Church. If an office of the pope was truly intended to be set up by Jesus, why should it only be for the lifetime of Peter and then vanish? The Church supposedly had a supervisor for ten, twenty years, but then never did *again*? That makes no sense. What would be the point?

In fact, the analogy of the keys, that comes from Isaiah 22 (as all agree) was itself referring to an office of the royal court, that *had succession*. If the *office itself* was used by Jesus as an analogy, then why not also the *succession* inherently involved in the office?

When other offices are referred to in the Bible (excepting the apostles and perhaps prophets), they were clearly regarded as permanent and ongoing (deacons, elders, pastors / priests / bishops). If that is the case, why would the papacy (granting that it exists as an office at all) be only temporary? By analogy, then, it follows that this office is perpetual just as the others are. If there are bishops, then it makes sense to have a *chief* bishop.

Moreover, the very nature of the concept of *office* is that it is bigger than one mere person who occupies it: even the first and most extraordinary one who does. It's quite obvious that Jesus' commissioning of Peter was the creation of a new office or position. It had to do with the governance of the Church and jurisdiction and power.

Jesus gave the disciples collectively the power to bind and loose (which meant, in rabbinic terms, to impose penance or grant absolution or release from penance): Matthew 18:18, but He gave the same power to Peter individually (Matthew 16:19). And so it is today: bishops have magisterial power only in a *collective* sense, whereas the pope has it *on his own* (though he routinely acts in concert with bishops).

Nor, indeed, was anything farther from the intention of the holy teachers, whom they falsely obtrude upon us, than to maintain distinctly that churches exist, as by hereditary right, wherever bishops have been uniformly succeeded by bishops. (IV, 2:3)

The continuity was doctrinal. It wasn't a guarantee that everyone in each individual church would be a perfect saint. This is patristic teaching (based on biblical teaching). If Calvin wishes to reject it, then he needs to at least give us a solid reason *why*.

But while it was without controversy that no change had been made in doctrine from the beginning down to their day, they assumed it to be a sufficient refutation of all their errors, that they were opposed to the doctrine maintained constantly, and with unanimous consent, even by

the apostles themselves. They have, therefore, no longer any ground for proceeding to make a gloss of the name of the Church, which we regard with due reverence; but when we come to definition, not only (to use the common expression) does the water adhere to them, but they stick in their own mire, because they substitute a vile prostitute for the sacred spouse of Christ. (IV, 2:3)

This is the claim, but why is it *believed*? At what point did this true Church become so apostate that it can't even be called a Church anymore? Apart from that being an impossibility, in faith, because of strong biblical teaching on indefectibility, it is absurd even from a strictly historical viewpoint for an entity to, all of a sudden, become the opposite of itself: the mirror image of what it had always claimed to be.

In what year did the Catholic Church supposedly reject Jesus Christ? When did idolatry become firmly entrenched in the Mass and weekly worship of Christians?—and so forth. It's very easy to locate a “Catholic” eucharistic theology and even the sacrifice of the Mass, early and widespread in patristic literature. Calvin doesn't answer those questions: nor do his followers today, because then (I submit) the absurdity and self-defeating nature of the anti-Catholic position would be manifest.

That the substitution may not deceive us, let us, among other admonitions, attend to the following from Augustine. Speaking of the Church, he says, “She herself is sometimes obscured, and, as it were, beclouded by a multitude of scandals; sometimes, in a time of tranquillity, she appears quiet and free; sometimes she is covered and tossed by the billows of tribulation and trial.”—(August. ad Vincent. Epist. 48). As instances, he mentions that the strongest pillars of the Church often bravely endured exile for the faith, or lay hid throughout the world. (IV, 2:3)

This is true. But St. Augustine didn't reject the Catholic Church, as Calvin did, and he firmly believed in the sacrifice of the mass. Why, then, doesn't Calvin also go after *him* and reject him as a Christian? For St. Augustine wrote:

Christ is both the priest, offering Himself, and Himself the Victim. He willed that the sacramental sign of this should be the daily sacrifice of

the Church.

(*City of God*, 10, 20)

Not only is no one forbidden to take as food the Blood of this Sacrifice, rather, all who wish to possess life are exhorted to drink thereof.

(*Questions of the Hepateuch*, 3, 57)

Protestant patristics scholar J. N. D. Kelly summarized St. Augustine's thought on the sacrifice of the mass:

The self-same Christ Who was slain there is in a real sense slaughtered daily by the faithful, so that the sacrifice which was offered once for all in bloody form is sacramentally renewed upon our altars with the oblation of His body and blood.

(*Early Christian Doctrines*, San Francisco: HarperCollins, revised 1978 edition 454; further sources: *Ep.* 98:9; cf. *C. Faust*, 20, 18; 20:21)

As to their charge of heresy and schism, because we preach a different doctrine, and submit not to their laws, ... (IV, 2:5)

It's refreshing, at least, to see Calvin admit that his doctrine is different from that which has been taught and received for 1500 years.

Hence, when the apostles were desirous to substitute another in the place of Judas, they did not venture to nominate any one certainly, but brought forward two, that the Lord might declare by lot which of them he wished to succeed (Acts 1:23). (IV, 3:13)

This demonstrates apostolic succession in the Bible. Yet Calvin rejects that notion, as historically always understood.

The same thing we may see in the election of Matthias. As the apostolic office was of such importance that they did not venture to appoint any one to it of their own judgment, they bring forward two, on one of whom the lot might fall, that thus the election might have a sure testimony from heaven, and, at the same time, the policy of the Church might not be disregarded. (IV, 3:14)

Why, then, should an apostle be replaced at *this* juncture, but then never *again*, with no further line of succession? It makes no sense to have a succession with Matthias, but not an ongoing succession. If the apostles were an altogether unique class, with no later succession, why bother to have just *one* succession?

4. Indefectibility of the Church vs. Massive Apostasy

But as soon as falsehood has forced its way into the citadel of religion, as soon as the sum of necessary doctrine is inverted, and the use of the sacraments is destroyed, the death of the Church undoubtedly ensues, just as the life of man is destroyed when his throat is pierced, or his vitals mortally wounded. (IV, 2:1)

How is this “falsehood” *defined*? Who determines orthodoxy? That’s the bottom line. It’s been abundantly proven by Protestant history that Scripture alone doesn’t suffice. Human interpretation and a doctrinal standard and authority must also exist, for men left on their own (at least some men; often *many* men) will always distort even a fairly clear, perspicuous Scripture.

For the Catholic, that authority and standard is the Catholic Church, headed by the popes and bishops and councils, with unbroken apostolic succession and authority down through the centuries. For Calvin and other Protestants, the authority is always *ultimately* arbitrary. Calvin simply *assumes* that he has the authority to question received doctrine.

The Church cannot possibly die, because it is *indefectible* (as the Church had always taught). Calvin apparently lacks the faith to believe that this is the case. For him, the Church can supposedly die completely (or be, in effect “brain-dead” if not technically dead). Are God’s hands too small to *preserve* the Church that *He Himself* established (Matthew 16)? Calvin thinks so, but this is strange, given his constant, commendable emphasis on God’s sovereignty, omnipotence, and majesty.

This is clearly evinced by the words of Paul when he says, that the Church is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone” (Eph. 2:20). If the Church is founded on the doctrine of the apostles and prophets, by which

believers are enjoined to place their salvation in Christ alone, then if that doctrine is destroyed, how can the Church continue to stand? The Church must necessarily fall whenever that sum of religion which alone can sustain it has given way. (IV, 2:1)

How can the true Church and true doctrine be destroyed in the first place and how can the true Church “fall” if *God* is the force behind them? That’s the real question. This is very odd, since in previous sections Calvin argued that the Old Testament Jews had an eternal covenant with God, no matter how much they strayed and rebelled and became corrupt. God always restored them. The covenant and idea of the “chosen people” always remained. There was *at least* a remnant.

Calvin doesn’t apply the present ideas to *that* scenario, yet he does with the Church, which is guided by the Holy Spirit and the much greater power available since the death of Jesus. He would have us believe that God had more power to preserve His people under the old covenant than He has under the New Covenant, made possible by the incarnation, Jesus’ work on the cross, resurrection, and ascension, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Why in the world would he think that? I contend that he was required by his own interior logic to think this, in order to bolster up his counter-claim as being in the true Church, over against the Catholic Church, headed by the popes, with the long, unbroken history back to the apostles. It’s a case where he becomes quite inconsistent. It’s a polemical requirement. He simply assumes the questionable premise without argument and starts building upon it.

Again, if the true Church is “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15), it is certain that there is no Church where lying and falsehood have usurped the ascendancy. (IV, 2:1)

Catholics wholeheartedly agree, but again, the problem is how to have a consistent, sensible method by which to determine where heresy is present: to distinguish the heretical false “church” (that in fact never *was* the Church) from the orthodox, true one (that always *was* the Church and cannot ever *cease* to be).

The only sensible, workable way to do that is to appeal back to apostolic history and received doctrine, passed down consistently. And that leads inexorably to the Catholic Church, for a great variety of reasons. But this is the very Church that Calvin seeks to reject, making his carefully constructed position radically self-defeating in the end.

His odd, curious denial of the indefectibility of the one true Church flies in the face of a great deal of Scripture. Old Testament messianic prophecies refer to an unending covenant between God and His people (by extension, the Church, led by Jesus Christ) and the unvanquishable kingdom of Christ:

Psalms 89:34–37 I will not violate my covenant, or alter the word that went forth from my lips. [35] Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. [36] His line shall endure for ever, his throne as long as the sun before me. [37] Like the moon it shall be established for ever; it shall stand firm while the skies endure.”

Isaiah 9:6–7 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” [7] Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and for evermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Isaiah 55:3 Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.

Isaiah 61:8 ... I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

Jeremiah 32:38–40 And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. [39] I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. [40] I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them; and I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.

Daniel 2:44 And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall its sovereignty be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand for ever;

Daniel 7:14 And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

Daniel 7:27 And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them.'

Luke 1:32–33 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, [33] and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Jesus' parables of the kingdom strongly imply an indefectibility of the Church:

Matthew 7:24–27 "Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; [25] and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. [26] And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; [27] and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it." (cf. parable of the wheat and the tares: 13:24–30, 36–43 and of the net and fish: 13:47–50)

The classic passage in favor of indefectibility is very clear:

Matthew 16:15–19 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" [16] Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." [17] And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona!

For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. [18] And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. [19] I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

The fact that Jesus and the Holy Spirit would always be “with” Christians implies the same:

Matthew 28:18–20 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.”

John 14:16–17 And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever, [17] even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you.

St. Paul assumes that the Eucharist would be celebrated till Christ returns:

1 Corinthians 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

The Church cannot ever defect from the truth because Jesus is her foundation and because God dwells within us, His “temple”:

1 Corinthians 3:9, 11, 16 For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building.... [11] For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.... [16] Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?

1 Corinthians 6:19 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own;

Ephesians 3:20–21 Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, [21] to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

Colossians 1:17–18 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. [18] He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent.

The Church is Christ's own Body; therefore it is as unending as Christ Himself:

Romans 12:4–5 For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, [5] so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

1 Corinthians 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

Ephesians 4:12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

Colossians 1:24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church,

If the Church is the pillar of truth, then the implication is that it will always be present to provide the standard by which doctrinal truth is judged:

1 Timothy 3:15 ... the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth.

Once all this is taken into consideration, it is completely ludicrous for Calvin to speak in terms of "the death of the Church" and "how can the Church continue to stand?" and "The Church must necessarily fall". To do so he has to ignore the biblical passages above, and demonstrate a remarkable lack of faith in God and His promises.

Since this is the state of matters under the Papacy, we can understand how much of the Church there survives. There, instead of the ministry of the word, prevails a perverted government, compounded of lies, a government which partly extinguishes, partly suppresses, the pure light. In place of the Lord's Supper, the foulest sacrilege has entered, the worship of God is deformed by a varied mass of intolerable superstitions; doctrine (without which Christianity exists not) is wholly buried and exploded, the public assemblies are schools of idolatry and impiety. (IV, 2:2)

Calvin had just stated in the previous section: "it is certain that there is no Church where lying and falsehood have usurped the ascendancy." As throughout, Calvin assumes false doctrine has crept in, without immediate argument (though he probably makes the argument somewhere in his writings). He seems to ignore the biblical "fact" that the true Church cannot defect or fall into total apostasy. It's not possible. If *a* Church ever was *the* Church, it cannot later fail to be so.

They, indeed, vaunt loudly of their Church, as if there was not another in the world; (IV, 2:2)

There is but *one* Church, biblically speaking, so obviously any Christian would (or should) identify the one he is in with that true Church, or else redefine the term altogether (and go the "invisible church" route). Calvin hedges his bets and (considering all that he states on this subject, in various places) tries to do both simultaneously, which is not logically possible to do.

Any argument he can muster against the Catholic Church, no matter how inconsistent with other of his arguments, will do. Thus, even a person as logical and systematic as Calvin is often done in by his incipient anti-Catholic prejudices and the need to constantly justify the existence of his own sectarian "church".

[T]hen, as if the matter were ended, they make out that all are schismatics who withdraw from obedience to that Church which they thus depict, that all are heretics who presume to whisper against its doctrine (see sec 5). (IV, 2:2)

That would inexorably follow, yes, if the Church is infallible; protected by God against doctrinal error. Calvin uses exactly the same reasoning chain in how he deals with dissidents from his *own* doctrine, so obviously the question comes down to relative strengths of competing truth claims as to where the true Church is to be found.

But by what arguments do they prove their possession of the true Church? (IV, 2:2)

We make our case by many many arguments indeed. By what arguments does *Calvin* prove that *his* “church” replaces the Catholic Church (and, for that matter, is superior to that of Luther and the many other Protestant sectarians that were already flourishing in his lifetime)? *That* is the crux of the matter.

They appeal to ancient records which formerly existed in Italy, France, and Spain, pretending to derive their origin from those holy men who, by sound doctrine, founded and raised up churches, confirmed the doctrine, and reared the edifice of the Church with their blood; they pretend that the Church thus consecrated by spiritual gifts and the blood of martyrs was preserved from destruction by a perpetual succession of bishops. (IV, 2:2)

Apostolic succession is an explicitly biblical notion, and also very firmly entrenched in the thinking of the early Church.

They dwell on the importance which Irenæus, Tertullian, Origen, Augustine, and others, attached to this succession (see sec. 3). (IV, 2:2)

Why would anyone *not* do so? Calvin constantly appeals to the Church fathers in support of his positions. He cites St. Augustine at the end of the very next section. By what criterion, then, should a Catholic not do the same?

First, I ask them why they do not quote Africa, and Egypt, and all Asia, just because in all those regions there was a cessation of that sacred succession, by the aid of which they vaunt of having continued churches. They therefore fall back on the assertion, that they have the true Church, because ever since it began to exist it was never destitute

of bishops, because they succeeded each other in an unbroken series. (IV, 2:2)

This is how the Church fathers (St. Irenæus perhaps most of all) always argued the point of authority: it was the final appeal, after Scripture had been argued about. What we receive both from Scripture and by the consensus of the fathers, is true (as we believe, from the eyes of faith). That was how it had always been in the Church, until Protestantism took a completely different course on the question of authority and the rule of faith.

It follows, therefore, that the pretence of succession is vain, if posterity do not retain the truth of Christ, which was handed down to them by their fathers, safe and uncorrupted, and continue in it. (IV, 2:2)

Calvin begs the question under consideration.

In the present day, therefore, the presence of the Romanists is just the same as that which appears to have been formerly used by the Jews, when the Prophets of the Lord charged them with blindness, impiety, and idolatry. (IV, 2:3)

Calvin here contradicts himself, because in previous sections (not far away from this one) he had argued that sin among the Jews did not disqualify them as a proto-Church: as God's chosen. He makes that argument when he thinks it will bolster his own ecclesiological claims, and then contradicts it when the target of criticism is the Catholic Church. When he compares his own "church" to the ancient Jews, it is to the noble remnant that God never abandoned. When he compares the Catholic Church to the ancient Jews, on the other hand, it is to the blind Pharisees, corrupt priests, idol-worshippers, etc.

But he himself had already argued that sinners are in the Church and that this doesn't prove that there is no Church. He does that in one place, but then turns around and denies the traditional, highly biblical doctrine of indefectibility in another. Whether he was *aware* of this internal inconsistency can scarcely be determined at this late date. I suspect that he *wasn't*, and that prejudice against the Catholic Church and polemical excess account for the departure from consistent reasoning.

For as the Jews proudly vaunted of their temple, ceremonies, and priesthood, by which, with strong reason, as they supposed, they measured the Church, so, instead of the Church, we are presented by the Romanists with certain external masks, which often are far from being connected with the Church, and without which the Church can perfectly exist. Wherefore, we need no other argument to refute them than that with which Jeremiah opposed the foolish confidence of the Jews—namely, “Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord are these” (Jer. 7:4). (IV, 2:3)

No Catholic worth his salt—who knows *anything* about his faith—trusts in the Church *per se*, as a mere human institution, but in the Church as *protected by God* the Holy Spirit. It’s faith in God Himself. The Church is God’s instrument for conveying His truths. This is not a concept foreign to Calvin, as he himself had taught in previous sections (IV, 1:3–4) about the *necessity* of the Church as a sort of “mother” to a Christian.

Thus, though the glory of God sat in the sanctuary between the cherubim (Ezek. 10:4), and he had promised that he would there have his stated abode, still when the priests corrupted his worship by depraved superstitions, he transferred it elsewhere, and left the place without any sanctity. (IV, 2:3)

Catholics agree. But Calvin neglects the larger picture. The Old Testament “proto-Church” did not cease to exist at this point, for in the very next chapter the prophet speaks of another renewal:

Ezekiel 11:16–21 Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: Though I removed them far off among the nations, and though I scattered them among the countries, yet I have been a sanctuary to them for a while in the countries where they have gone.’ [17] Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: I will gather you from the peoples, and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.’ [18] And when they come there, they will remove from it all its detestable things and all its abominations. [19] And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them; I will take the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, [20] that they may

walk in my statutes and keep my ordinances and obey them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. [21] But as for those whose heart goes after their detestable things and their abominations, I will requite their deeds upon their own heads, says the Lord GOD.”

Connected to this motif in the prophets, of the new covenant (see also Jeremiah 31:31–34), was the notion of universal “pure offering”—fulfilled by the Catholic mass:

Isaiah 66:18, 21 For I know their works and their thoughts, and I am coming to gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and shall see my glory, ... [21] And some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites, says the LORD.

Malachi 1:11 For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering; for my name is great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts.

If that temple which seemed consecrated for the perpetual habitation of God, could be abandoned by God and become profane, the Romanists have no ground to pretend that God is so bound to persons or places, and fixed to external observances, that he must remain with those who have only the name and semblance of a Church. (IV, 2:3)

We Catholics respond by reaffirming that we have the promises of Christ, to always be with us. He not only indwells us (1 Corinthians 3:9–16; 6:19), but also comes to us in the Holy Eucharist, without which we have no salvation (John 6:53–58):

Matthew 28:20 ... I am with you always, to the close of the age.

John 14:16–17 And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever, [17] even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you.

These promises are stronger than the old covenant promises, because they result from the work of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Calvin cannot use Old Testament analogies (in *this* regard) to

prove that the Catholic Church could defect from the truth, or that Christ would depart from her. We also have the prophecies of a universal priesthood, such as in Isaiah 66 and Malachi 1 (seen above), and of Jesus' eternal priesthood, which is closely connected to the sacrifice of the mass (Ps 110:4; Heb 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:1–28).

This is the question which Paul discusses in the Epistle to the Romans, from the ninth to the twelfth chapter. Weak consciences were greatly disturbed, when those who seemed to be the people of God not only rejected, but even persecuted the doctrine of the Gospel. Therefore, after expounding doctrine, he removes this difficulty, denying that those Jews, the enemies of the truth, were the Church, though they wanted nothing which might otherwise have been desired to the external form of the Church. (IV, 2:3)

Obviously the Church was a different entity from the Jewish people. No one will dispute that. For the present purposes, however, did St. Paul argue in Romans 9–12 that the Jews were completely cut off from God (as Calvin pretty much argues is the case with the Catholic Church)? No. More than once he states the *opposite*:

Romans 9:4 They are Israelites, and to them belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises;

Romans 11:1–5 I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. [2] God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the scripture says of Eli'jah, how he pleads with God against Israel? [3] "Lord, they have killed thy prophets, they have demolished thy altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life." [4] But what is God's reply to him? "I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Ba'al." [5] So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.

Romans 11:26–29 and so all Israel will be saved; as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob"; [27] "and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their

sins.” [28] As regards the gospel they are enemies of God, for your sake; but as regards election they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. [29] For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.

The name of heretics and schismatics is applied to those who, by dissenting from the Church, destroy its communion. This communion is held together by two chains—viz. consent in sound doctrine and brotherly charity. Hence the distinction which Augustine makes between heretics and schismatics is, that the former corrupt the purity of the faith by false dogmas, whereas the latter sometimes, even while holding the same faith, break the bond of union (August. Lib. Quæst. in Evang. Mt.). (IV, 2:5)

Protestants did both. They were heretical *insofar* as they dissented on Catholic orthodox teaching, and schismatic *insofar* as they refused to remain in communion with the Catholic Church.

But the thing to be observed is, that this union of charity so depends on unity of faith, as to have in it its beginning, its end, in fine, its only rule. Let us therefore remember, that whenever ecclesiastical unity is commended to us, the thing required is, that while our minds consent in Christ, our wills also be united together by mutual good-will in Christ. Accordingly Paul, when he exhorts us to it, takes for his fundamental principle that there is “one God, one faith, one baptism” (Eph. 4:5). Nay, when he tells us to be “of one accord, of one mind,” he immediately adds, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:2, 5); intimating, that where the word of the Lord is not, it is not a union of believers, but a faction of the ungodly. (IV, 2:5)

The fundamental question to be decided, therefore, is, “what is this one faith and one truth and one Church of Christ, that we may be part of it?” It won’t do to assume that one’s own self-created communion is the Church, without argument and demonstration.

Hitherto we have reviewed those ecclesiastical orders which existed in the government of the primitive Church; but afterwards corrupted by time, and thereafter more and more vitiated, now only retain the name in the Papal Church, and are, in fact, nothing but mere masks, so that

the contrast will enable the pious reader to judge what kind of Church that is, for revolting from which we are charged with schism. (IV, 6:1)

Yet Calvin has not yet proven that the Catholic Church completely fell away. He simply reports cases of corruption and “concludes” (i.e., assumes) that there was a total apostasy. This doesn’t follow at all. It ignores the biblical aspect of indefectibility, and even clashes with Calvin’s own previous treatment of the topic of sinners in the Church. He assumes the Catholic Church is not what it is, or has always claimed to be; it is not (so he reasons) the Church of the fathers, that he thinks much more highly of; therefore, to dissent from it is not schism or scandalous; indeed, it is altogether necessary. This is viciously circular “logic.”

But, on the head and crown of the whole matter, I mean the primacy of the Roman See, from which they undertake to prove that the Catholic Church is to be found only with them, we have not yet touched, because it did not take its origin either in the institution of Christ, or the practice of the early Church, as did those other parts, in regard to which we have shown, that though they were ancient in their origin, they in process of time altogether degenerated, nay, assumed an entirely new form. (IV, 6:1)

“Entirely new” has not been proven. Calvin throughout his work has a dim understanding of development of doctrine: a tendency quite pronounced in many Protestants.

And yet they endeavour to persuade the world that the chief and only bond of ecclesiastical unity is to adhere to the Roman See, and continue in subjection to it. I say, the prop on which they chiefly lean, when they would deprive us of the Church, and arrogate it to themselves, (IV, 6:1)

The Church is what it is. It doesn’t change simply because someone like Calvin came along and claimed that it was something quite essentially different from what it had always been for almost 1500 years. That is not “arrogating” or “depriving” anyone of anything. It is reality. There is a history to grapple with, and a background. Christianity consists of objective, verifiable entities and concepts; not subjective pick-and-choose, relative, “make-something-whatever-you-want-it-to-be” mush.

Let the Romanists now go and oppose us with antiquity; as if, amid such a complete change in every respect, the honour of the See can continue where there is no See. (IV, 7:26)

Calvin has by no means proven that there was a “complete change in every respect”. He doesn’t even make a pretense of providing factual substantiation.

Eusebius says that God, to make way for his vengeance, transferred the Church which was at Jerusalem to Pella (Euseb. Lib. 3 cap. 5). What we are told was once done may have been done repeatedly. Hence it is too absurd and ridiculous so to fix the honour of the primacy to a particular spot, so that he who is in fact the most inveterate enemy of Christ, the chief adversary of the Gospel, the greatest devastator and waster of the Church, the most cruel slayer and murderer of the saints, should be, nevertheless, regarded as the vicegerent of Christ, the successor of Peter, the first priest of the Church, merely because he occupies what was formerly the first of all sees. (IV, 7:26)

If it was formerly “first of all sees,” then when did it *cease* to be so, and why? What year did this momentous change take place? When did the Holy Spirit entirely depart from the Roman See? None of this is argued; it is assumed (more circular logic). Calvin makes all these outlandish claims without demonstrating any of them.

[T]hough Rome was formerly the first of churches, she deserves not in the present day to be regarded as one of her minutest members. (IV, 7:29)

I guess, then, that Rome was, in Calvin’s eyes, what Zwingli and other non-Lutheran Protestant “reformers” were in Luther’s eyes. In his work, *Brief Confession Concerning the Holy Sacrament*, written in September 1544, after all, Luther describes Zwingli, Karlstadt, Oecolampadius, and Caspar Schwenkfeld as men who are guilty of “blasphemies and deceitful heresy” (*Luther’s Works*, Volume 38, 288), and who were “loathsome fanatics” (38, 291), “murderers of souls” (38, 296), who “possess a bedeviled, thoroughly bedeviled, hyper-bedeviled heart and lying tongue” (38, 296), and who “have incurred their penalty and are committing ‘sin which is mortal,’” (38,

296), “blasphemers and enemies of Christ” (38, 302), and “God’s and our condemned enemies” (38, 316). He described Zwingli as a “full-blown heathen” (38, 290), and wrote: “I am certain that Zwingli, as his last book testifies, died in a great many sins and in blasphemy of God” (38, 302–303)

That sounds a lot like the ancient Corinthian and Galatian churches, and scarcely distinguishable from how Calvin describes Rome and the popes. Things remain the same as always. Men sin. The point is that sin can be found anywhere and everywhere, so that if the presence of sin eliminates the presence of a church or a bishop or indeed, a Christian at all, then there are virtually no churches or bishops or Christians. Since that proves too much, one must return to the premise and see what went wrong.

Their idea that the truth cannot remain in the Church unless it exist among pastors, and that the Church herself cannot exist unless displayed in general councils, is very far from holding true if the prophets have left us a correct description of their own times. In the time of Isaiah there was a Church at Jerusalem which the Lord had not yet abandoned. But of pastors he thus speaks: “His watchmen are blind; they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way” (Isa. 56:10, 11). In the same way Hosea says, “The watchman of Ephraim was with my God: but the prophet is a snare of a fowler in all his ways, and hatred in the house of his God” (Hosea 9:8). Here, by ironically connecting them with God, he shows that the pretext of the priesthood was vain. There was also a Church in the time of Jeremiah. Let us hear what he says of pastors: “From the prophet even unto the priest, every one dealeth falsely.” Again, “The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them” (Jer. 6:13; 14:14). And not to be prolix with quotations, read the whole of his thirty-third and fortieth chapters. Then, on the other hand, Ezekiel inveighs against them in no milder terms. “There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have devoured souls.” “Her priests have violated my law, and profaned mine holy

things” (Ezek. 22:25, 26). There is more to the same purpose. Similar complaints abound throughout the prophets; nothing is of more frequent recurrence. (IV, 9:3)

Israel went through many periods of more or less complete corruption; this is obvious. But we are in a new dispensation now, after the appearance of our Savior and Redeemer Jesus Christ: the incarnation, redeeming death, resurrection, and ascension. We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and have the power of the sacraments, and God’s promises of guidance and protection.

All of that makes the situation after Christ quite different from before the time of Christ. We see the massive change, for example, in the conduct of Peter, before and after he was filled with the Holy Spirit. *Before* Pentecost, even the immediate disciples of Jesus were a pretty poor, miserable lot, barely understanding what Jesus was teaching them and failing to understand even the purpose of Jesus’ death on the cross.

After Pentecost, they went out joyously, and triumphantly conquered the world. Yet Calvin would have us believe that *nothing whatever* was changed from the old covenant times and corrupt priests in Israel? It is often thought by Calvin and Protestants that Catholics are stuck in a rut of the old covenant: supposedly believing in works-salvation, etc.: a belief that even mainstream Judaism did not and does not hold, rightly understood.

But here it is obvious that the Catholic position is the progressive one, while Calvin’s old covenant redux position is regressive, and lacks faith in the power of God in the new covenant, and in God’s promises for His Church, built upon Peter himself.

Moreover, this whole line of reasoning would prove too much, because if corruption is well-nigh universal, then Calvin’s own version of “church” would be every bit as much subject to the same thing, and there would be no reason to believe that Protestantism is at all superior to Catholicism (if we stick strictly to the “sin” argument). Arguing from sin and corruption never accomplishes much, for this very reason. Calvin can try to maintain that Protestants are singularly freed from corruption and sin and religious nominalism, but it’s a futile effort.

If he wishes to argue a lesser claim: that institutional offices in the Church are null and void because of widespread corruption (real or imagined), then this, too, works against his own position, as he was not opposed to abolition of all Church offices and positions whatever. The entire argument he wishes to make along these lines is a dead-end. It accomplishes nothing whatsoever.

5. “Primary” vs. “Secondary” Doctrines

Nay, even in the administration of word and sacraments defects may creep in which ought not to alienate us from its communion. For all the heads of true doctrine are not in the same position. Some are so necessary to be known, that all must hold them to be fixed and undoubted as the proper essentials of religion: for instance, that God is one, that Christ is God, and the Son of God, that our salvation depends on the mercy of God, and the like. Others, again, which are the subject of controversy among the churches, do not destroy the unity of the faith; for why should it be regarded as a ground of dissension between churches, if one, without any spirit of contention or perverseness in dogmatising, hold that the soul on quitting the body flies to heaven, and another, without venturing to speak positively as to the abode, holds it for certain that it lives with the Lord? (IV, 1:12)

Here Calvin exhibits a fatal flaw in Protestant thinking that has plagued it from the beginning: this notion of “primary” vs. “secondary” doctrines, with the latter regarded as “up for grabs,” so that Protestants may freely disagree with each other (and other Christians), thus adding a dangerous element of doctrinal relativism. Catholics agree that some doctrines are far more important than others in the scheme of things, but they don’t take this additional step of throwing all less important doctrines up to individual subjectivism and philosophical relativism.

The general notion of “essential” or “central” and “secondary” doctrines is an unbiblical distinction. Nowhere in Scripture do we find any implication that some things pertaining to doctrine and theology were optional, while others had to be believed. Jesus urged us to “observe all that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19), without distinction.

Likewise, St. Paul regards Christian Tradition as of one piece; not an amalgam of permissible competing theories; he refers to: “the tradition that you received from us” (2 Thess 3:6); “the truth which has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit” (2 Tim 1:14); “the doctrine which you have been taught” (Rom 16:17); “being in full accord and of one mind” (Phil 2:2); “stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,” (Phil 1:27). He, like Jesus, ties doctrinal unity together with the one God: “maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, ... one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ...” (Eph. 4:3–5).

St. Peter also refers to one, unified “way of righteousness” and “the holy commandment delivered to them” (2 Pet 2:21), while St. Jude urges us to “contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). Luke 2:42 casually mentions “the apostles’ teaching” without any hint that there were competing interpretations of it, or variations of the teaching.

The words of the Apostle are, “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you” (Phil. 3:15). Does he not sufficiently intimate that a difference of opinion as to these matters which are not absolutely necessary, ought not to be a ground of dissension among Christians? (IV, 1:12)

This passage has been yanked out of context and made to apply to supposed doctrinal latitude, when in fact, St. Paul, in this entire chapter of Philippians, is discussing striving towards a salvation not yet certainly obtained. When Paul says “be thus minded” he is referring to his statement immediately prior:

Philippians 3:12–14 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. [13] Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, [14] I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

This has nothing to do with supposed *doctrinal* disputes, as Calvin oddly seems to think. Elsewhere in the same book (and many other times throughout his letters) Paul makes clear that there is one truth and unchanging set of doctrines that he has passed on, without any shade of variability:

Philippians 1:25, 27 Convinced of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, ... Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,

Philippians 4:9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace will be with you.

The best thing, indeed, is to be perfectly agreed, but seeing there is no man who is not involved in some mist of ignorance, we must either have no church at all, or pardon delusion in those things of which one may be ignorant, without violating the substance of religion and forfeiting salvation. Here, however, I have no wish to patronise even the minutest errors, as if I thought it right to foster them by flattery or connivance; what I say is, that we are not on account of every minute difference to abandon a church, provided it retain sound and unimpaired that doctrine in which the safety of piety consists, and keep the use of the sacraments instituted by the Lord. (IV, 1:12)

Protestants have too readily given in to human ignorance and mere subjectivism: that is a huge part of its problem. It lacks the authority to maintain unity because its principles (in their unforeseen consequences) ultimately undermined Church authority from the beginning.

Again, the problem is that the original “minute” difference (even if we grant that it is, indeed, “minute” and inconsequential) quickly becomes a loophole, then a gaping hole, and finally, a broad highway of mutually contradictory opinions, leading to further dissent, sectarianism, acrimony, and doctrinal uncertainty. Nowhere does Holy Scripture ever envision such an uncontrolled state of affairs. Calvin’s denial of the infallibility of the Church in fact leads to the very eventualities that he himself decries because the door to theological relativism is laid wide open.

The sort of ecclesiastical discipline that Calvin envisions has become practically impossible in Protestantism-at-large, because if discipline occurs, there is always the option of the person simply going to another denomination and starting afresh, or starting a new denomination altogether. There is no Protestant “church” to speak of, given this absurd institutional division and multiplicity of competing sects.

6. Conscience, Private Judgment, and Church Authority

Many are greatly puzzled with this question, from not distinguishing, with sufficient care, between what is called the external forum and the forum of conscience (Book 3 chap. 19 sec 15). Moreover, the difficulty is increased by the terms in which Paul enjoins obedience to magistrates, “not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake” (Rom. 13:5); and from which it would follow, that civil laws also bind the conscience. But if this were so, nothing that we have said of spiritual government, in the last chapter, and are to say in this, would stand. To solve this difficulty, we must first understand what is meant by conscience. The definition must be derived from the etymology of the term. As when men, with the mind and intellect, apprehend the knowledge of things, they are thereby said to know, and hence the name of science or knowledge is used; so, when they have, in addition to this, a sense of the divine judgment, as a witness not permitting them to hide their sins, but bringing them as criminals before the tribunal of the judge, that sense is called conscience. (IV, 10:3)

Yes, but our consciences are clearly formed by many outside influences: upbringing, culture, friends, moral teachings inculcated in the normal course of life, and the Bible itself and whatever ecclesiastical authority we attempt to abide by. The Catholic argues that the Church is fundamental in forming an individual conscience, and that the two should not and will not conflict.

If—in the final analysis—it falls back completely on the individual, on the other hand (as Protestant premises require), we have the same

unsolvable problems we always run into: what to do when opinions contradict; both claim to be biblical, etc.?

Without the authoritative guidance of the Church, men will always differ. Great men did this even about the very books that constitute Scripture. Without a Church proclamation, the canon of the New Testament would have henceforth been uncertain, with many variations. It all sounds fine in theory, but in practice it almost immediately breaks down.

For it occupies a kind of middle place between God and man, not suffering man to suppress what he knows in himself, but following him out until it bring him to conviction. This is what Paul means, when he says that conscience bears witness, “our thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing each other” (Rom. 2:15). (IV, 10:3)

St. Paul doesn't relegate doctrine to conscience alone (theoretically tied to the Bible alone), as Calvin does (Acts 16:4 alone proves this, among many other passages). To the contrary, Paul is quite clear that there is one doctrine, one truth, one “faith” (*the faith*) and that this is in line with the Church (not—ultimately—logically or epistemologically *separate* from the Church, as in Protestantism).

Obviously, whatever the individual arrives at through conscience, St. Paul would say has to be in line with “the faith,” “the truth,” “tradition,” “the gospel,” etc. And thus we are back to unavoidable, binding Church authority:

Acts 16:4 As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the *decisions* which had been reached by the apostles and elders who were at Jerusalem.

Romans 2:8 but for those who are factious and do not obey *the truth*, but obey wickedness, there will be wrath and fury.

Romans 16:17 ... take note of those who create dissensions and difficulties, in opposition to *the doctrine* which you have been taught; avoid them.

Galatians 5:7 You were running well; who hindered you from obeying *the truth*?

Ephesians 3:10 ... *through the church* the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.

Colossians 1:23 provided that you continue in *the faith*, stable and steadfast, ...

Colossians 2:7 rooted and built up in him and established in *the faith*, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received *the word of God* which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, *the word of God*, which is at work in you believers.

2 Thessalonians 3:6 ... *the tradition* that you received from us.

1 Timothy 1:2 To Timothy, my true child in *the faith*: ...

1 Timothy 2:4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of *the truth*.

1 Timothy 3:15 if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is *the church* of the living God, *the pillar and bulwark of the truth*.

1 Timothy 4:3 ... those who believe and know *the truth*. (cf. 4:1; 4:6; 5:8; 6:10, 12, 21)

2 Timothy 1:13–14 Follow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me ... guard *the truth* which has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us. (cf. 2:18, 25; 3:7–8; 4:4)

2 Timothy 2:2 And *what you have heard from me* before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

Titus 3:15 ... Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. (cf. 1:1)

Simple knowledge, therefore, might exist in a man, as it were, shut up, and therefore the sense which sits men before the judgment-seat of God has been placed over him as a sentinel, to observe and spy out all his

secrets, that nothing may remain buried in darkness. Hence the old proverb, Conscience is a thousand witnesses. (IV, 10:3)

Here's another proverb: "a thousand consciences formed without the guidance of Holy Mother Church, will form 1001 opinions, just as Luther said, 'there are as many sects as there are heads.'"

For this reason, Peter also uses the "answer of a good conscience towards God" (1 Pet. 3:21); (IV, 10:3)

In the very same passage, St. Peter teaches baptismal regeneration: an ancient, apostolic, patristic, biblical doctrine that Calvin, with the aid of his all-too-fertile conscience, denied:

1 Peter 3:20–21 who formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. [21] Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

The same Peter talks about "the truth":

1 Peter 1:22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere love of the brethren, love one another earnestly from the heart.

2 Peter 1:12 Therefore I intend always to remind you of these things, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have.

2 Peter 2:1–2 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their licentiousness, and because of them the way of truth will be reviled.

Peter makes other casual dogmatic statements, suggesting a strong Church authority and a binding tradition in addition to conscience and the Bible:

2 Peter 2:21 ... the holy commandment delivered to them.

2 Peter 3:1–2 This is now the second letter that I have written to you, beloved, and in both of them I have aroused your sincere mind by way of reminder; that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles.

[F]or tranquillity of mind, when, persuaded of the grace of Christ, we with boldness present ourselves before God. And the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, that we have “no more conscience of sins,” that we are freed or acquitted, so that sin no longer accuses us (Heb. 10:2). (IV, 10:3)

This is also within the context of a teaching Church, that can bind the same consciences:

Hebrews 10:26 For if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

Hebrews 13:7 Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith.

Thus the author of Hebrews, St. Peter, and St. Paul all maintain the “three-legged stool” view of the Catholic Church through the ages, not the private judgment / absolute supremacy of individual conscience / *sola Scriptura* position of Calvin and his Protestant comrades.

Wherefore, as works have respect to men, so conscience bears reference to God; and hence a good conscience is nothing but inward integrity of heart. In this sense, Paul says, that “the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned” (1 Tim. 1:5). He afterwards, in the same chapter, shows how widely it differs from intellect, saying, the, “some having put away” a good conscience, “concerning faith have made shipwreck.” For by these words he intimates, that it is a living inclination to worship God, a sincere desire to live piously and holily. Sometimes, indeed, it is extended to men also, as when Paul declares, “Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men” (Acts 24:16). But this is said, because the benefits of a good conscience flow forth and reach even to men. Properly speaking,

however, it respects God alone, as I have already said. Hence a law may be said to bind the conscience when it simply binds a man without referring to men, or taking them into account. For example, God enjoins us not only to keep our mind chaste and pure from all lust, but prohibits every kind of obscenity in word, and all external lasciviousness. This law my conscience is bound to observe, though there were not another man in the world. Thus he who behaves intemperately not only sins by setting a bad example to his brethren, but stands convicted in his conscience before God. Another rule holds in the case of things which are in themselves indifferent. For we ought to abstain when they give offence, but conscience is free. Thus Paul says of meat consecrated to idols, "If any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that showed it, and for conscience sake;" "conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other" (1 Cor. 10:28, 29). A believer would sin, if, after being warned, he should still eat such kind of meat. But however necessary abstinence may be in respect of a brother, as prescribed by the Lord, conscience ceases not to retain its liberty. We see how the law, while binding the external work, leaves the conscience free. (IV, 10:4)

St. Paul and other writers do not disconnect an informed Christian conscience from the guidance of the Church:

Acts 23:1, 6–8 And Paul, looking intently at the council, said, "Brethren, *I have lived before God in all good conscience up to this day.*" ... [6] But when Paul perceived that one part were Sad'ducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Brethren, *I am a Pharisee*, a son of Pharisees; with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead I am on trial." [7] And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sad'ducees; and the assembly was divided. [8] For the Sad'ducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.

Paul here shows exactly what he means by having a "good conscience." It was formed in the context of tradition. He appeals to a doctrinal school (Pharisaism) and identifies himself with it (over against the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, and angels). That was what it meant to live

“before God in all good conscience.” It can’t be divorced from binding doctrines.

Yet that is exactly what Calvin is driving at, by stressing the autonomous individual conscience and the corresponding notion that there are no binding decrees of the Church that can be considered infallible and unquestionable. It’s exactly the same in the context of a passage that Calvin mentions above:

Acts 24:14–16 But this I admit to you, that according to *the Way*, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, *believing everything laid down by the law or written in the prophets*, [15] having a hope in God which these themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. [16] So I always take pains to have a *clear conscience toward God* and toward men.

Having a “clear conscience toward God” is directly tied, in Paul’s mind, to observance of the Law (a binding thing), and doctrines like the general resurrection. Not just the Church, but even secular rulers are to be obeyed “for the sake of conscience”:

Romans 13:1–7 Let every person be *subject to the governing authorities*. For there is *no authority except from God*, and those that exist have been instituted by God. [2] Therefore he who *resists the authorities* resists *what God has appointed*, and those who resist will incur judgment. [3] For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of him who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, [4] for *he is God’s servant* for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain; he is the servant of God to execute his wrath on the wrongdoer. [5] Therefore *one must be subject, not only to avoid God’s wrath but also for the sake of conscience*. [6] For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the *authorities are ministers of God*, attending to this very thing. [7] Pay all of them their dues, taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, *honor to whom honor is due*.

Paul ties in conscience with “the truth” and “doctrine” and “divine training” and “the faith”:

2 Corinthians 4:2 We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways; we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with *God's word*, but by the open statement of *the truth* we would commend ourselves to every man's *conscience* in the sight of God.

1 Timothy 1:3–7 As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus that you may charge certain persons *not to teach any different doctrine*, [4] nor to occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies which promote speculations rather than the *divine training that is in faith*; [5] whereas the aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a *good conscience* and sincere faith. [6] Certain persons by swerving from these have wandered away into vain discussion, [7] desiring to be teachers of *the law*, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make assertions.

1 Timothy 3:9 they must hold the mystery of *the faith* with a clear *conscience*.

1 Timothy 4:1–2 Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from *the faith* by giving heed to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, [2] through the pretensions of liars whose *consciences* are seared,

Titus 1:13–15 This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be *sound in the faith*, [14] instead of giving heed to Jewish myths or to commands of men who reject *the truth*. [15] To the pure all things are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure; their very minds and *consciences* are corrupted.

The writer of Hebrews also follows suit:

Hebrews 10:22–23 let us draw near with a true heart in *full assurance of faith*, with our hearts *sprinkled clean from an evil conscience* and our bodies washed with pure water. [23] Let us hold fast *the confession* of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful;

Hebrews 13:17–18 Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account. Let them do this joyfully, and not sadly, for that would be of no

advantage to you. [18] Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a *clear conscience*, desiring to act honorably in all things.

What God commands, we are not at liberty to disobey. And these commands include submission to the Church and Tradition. Nothing is more a “tyranny of man” (Calvin’s words in IV, 10:5), in terms of theology, than requiring each person to have to figure everything out on their own, without any authoritative Church.

That this may be more easily understood, let us divide the Church into two principal classes—viz. clergy and people. The term clergy I use in the common acceptation for those who perform a public ministry in the Church. We shall speak first of the common discipline to which all ought to be subject, and then proceed to the clergy, who have besides that common discipline one peculiar to themselves. But as some, from hatred of discipline, are averse to the very name, for their sake we observe,—If no society, nay, no house with even a moderate family, can be kept in a right state without discipline, much more necessary is it in the Church, whose state ought to be the best ordered possible. Hence as the saving doctrine of Christ is the life of the Church, so discipline is, as it were, its sinews; for to it it is owing that the members of the body adhere together, each in its own place. Wherefore, all who either wish that discipline were abolished, or who impede the restoration of it, whether they do this of design or through thoughtlessness, certainly aim at the complete devastation of the Church. For what will be the result if every one is allowed to do as he pleases? But this must happen if to the preaching of the gospel are not added private admonition, correction, and similar methods of maintaining doctrine, and not allowing it to become lethargic. Discipline, therefore, is a kind of curb to restrain and tame those who war against the doctrine of Christ, or it is a kind of stimulus by which the indifferent are aroused; sometimes, also, it is a kind of fatherly rod, by which those who have made some more grievous lapse are chastised in mercy with the meekness of the spirit of Christ. Since, then, we already see some beginnings of a fearful devastation in the Church from the total want of care and method in managing the people, necessity itself cries aloud that there is need of a remedy. Now

the only remedy is this which Christ enjoins, and the pious have always had in use. (IV, 12:1)

It is useful to remember that Calvin's concerns about anarchy have to do with the proliferating Protestant sects of his period; particularly the Anabaptists. As always, neither he nor Luther will face the rather obvious fact that their new principles of authority (*sola Scriptura*, private judgment, no infallibility, no apostolic succession as previously always understood, no bishops, no popes, no ecumenical councils, disdain of apostolic tradition, etc.) directly *led* to these developments.

Whether they were aware of that or not, Protestants today continue to live with the consequences and continue to be unable to do anything about continuing scandalous sectarianism and hundreds, thousands of competing denominations.

As I have always argued, this is, in effect (or at the very least as a consistent logical reduction), ecclesiological anarchism and theological relativism, since there are abundant contradictions entailed. Denominations are unknown in Holy Scripture, where it is taught that there is one Church. Denominations make consistent, effective discipline impossible.

The “disciplined” one simply has to leave and go to another denomination that will accept him in his sin, or even (as a special bonus), think his or her sin is *no sin at all*. What were once grave sins (for Luther and Calvin and millions of subsequent Protestants throughout history and today; particularly in non-western countries) are now considered legitimate “lifestyle choices” that ought to be respected and sanctioned by church and civil law alike (so we are told).

7. Denial of Infallible Church Councils

Taking it for granted, that a universal council is a true representation of the Church, they set out with this principle, and, at the same time, lay it down as incontrovertible, that such councils are under the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit, and therefore cannot err. (IV, 8:10)

That was the case with the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:25, 28–29), and all true councils. Does Calvin think that this state of affairs is no longer

applicable in the Church? Jesus (John, chapters 14–16) said we would have the Holy Spirit to guide us and lead us into all truth. Has Calvin lost faith in that ongoing guidance?

When one puts one's faith in God, to guide sinful men (but above all, His Church) for His sovereign purposes, it's very different. Calvin wants to emphasize God's sovereignty, which is good, but seems to repeatedly deny it when it comes to examining *how God leads men* for His sovereign purposes.

The Church, they say, has the noble promise that she will never be deserted by Christ her spouse, but be guided by his Spirit into all truth. But of the promises which they are wont to allege, many were given not less to private believers than to the whole Church. For although the Lord spake to the twelve apostles, when he said, "Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Mt. 28:20); and again, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever: even the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16, 17), he made these promises not only to the twelve, but to each of them separately, nay, in like manner, to other disciples whom he already had received, or was afterwards to receive. When they interpret these promises, which are replete with consolation, in such a way as if they were not given to any particular Christian but to the whole Church together, what else is it but to deprive Christians of the confidence which they ought thence to have derived, to animate them in their course? I deny not that the whole body of the faithful is furnished with a manifold variety of gifts, and endued with a far larger and richer treasure of heavenly wisdom than each Christian apart; nor do I mean that this was said of believers in general, as implying that all possess the spirit of wisdom and knowledge in an equal degree: but we are not to give permission to the adversaries of Christ to defend a bad cause, by wresting Scripture from its proper meaning. (IV, 8:11)

It will only compound Calvin's epistemological problems, if he wishes to minimize the corporate nature of Christianity (as Protestantism always tends to do, by nature). Then he will have to show how individuals possess the fullness of truth, over against institutions, and that opens up a bunch of

cans of worms that have no resolution whatsoever within the Protestant presuppositional framework.

If Church-wide belief is rejected, why is it that Protestants (including Calvin himself) maintained creeds and confessions? Obviously there is a sense in which the individual has to yield to truths larger than himself and his subjective world, or else we'd have as many creeds as there are Christian brains. This line of reasoning goes nowhere. It's doomed to failure.

This approach even defeats the purpose of Calvin's own book, here under consideration, if the next Christian can simply say, "that's just Calvin's opinion. What does it have to do with *me*? It undermines my confidence in Christ to determine my own doctrines; therefore, I reject it as irrelevant. I have the Holy Spirit, and my Bible. Who needs Calvin?" If a person's "argument" undermines the very words he is writing, then we must step back and examine the faulty premises.

Folks who are equally led by the Spirit do in fact arrive at different interpretations of Scripture. Authoritative dogma and boundaries are always required, for that reason. God knew this, which is why He set up an authoritative teaching Church, not a system of individualistic subjectivism: itself far more a secular Enlightenment or Romantic or eastern religious concept than a biblical one.

Men of sense see how great the danger is if so much authority is once conceded to men. They see also how wide a door is opened for the jeers and cavils of the ungodly, if we admit that Christians are to receive the opinions of men as if they were oracles. (IV, 8:15)

Here again is the hostility to the idea of God using sinners as His instruments, for His purposes. Calvin doesn't have faith enough to believe that God could do that. Every writer of Scripture was an oracle because he wrote inspired words. If one can believe in that miracle, as Calvin does, the gift of infallibility requires less faith. Yet he rejects the latter, as it it were at all impossible for God to accomplish, or something He likely wouldn't do. Apostles already spoke with extraordinary authority. Why not the Church?

What, then, you will say, is there no authority in the definitions of councils? Yes, indeed; for I do not contend that all councils are to be

condemned, and all their acts rescinded, or, as it is said, made one complete erasure. But you are bringing them all (it will be said) under subordination, and so leaving every one at liberty to receive or reject the decrees of councils as he pleases. By no means; but whenever the decree of a council is produced, the first thing I would wish to be done is, to examine at what time it was held, on what occasion, with what intention, and who were present at it; next I would bring the subject discussed to the standard of Scripture. (IV, 9:8)

This sounds sensible and “moderate,” but how does it work in *practice*? The Council of Nicaea, for example, made certain decrees. If at length a Protestant today decides that certain of these decrees are insufficiently “biblical” etc., on what basis does he discard them: by his private judgment alone?

If that is the case, several problems immediately arise. Why should his single opinion trump that of dozens or hundreds of bishops, as the case may be? Why should we take the opinion of the one over the opinion of the many? But granting that such a scenario is acceptable, now (very often, given internal Protestant division and doctrinal chaos) we have two individuals (say, Luther and Calvin) who reject a council and substitute something else in its place with regard to some theological particular. But they disagree as to the *substitute*.

Now, then, we have an ancient council that is partially rejected, on the authority of a single individual. Two such individuals might very well disagree on the solution to the “error.” Whom do we choose, and on what basis? Why should we assume that a lone individual has a superior interpretation of Scripture and theological tradition, over against an assembly of many learned bishops? Or if a group today (some dreaded committee of some denomination) decides to overrule Nicaea or Chalcedon, etc., why should we accept their corporate dogmatic authority more than Nicaea’s or Chalcedon’s (or Pope Leo the Great’s)?

We see, then, that this thinking is arbitrary at every turn, and it always, inevitably logically reduces to radical individualism and doctrinal relativism, when one rejects the traditional understanding of Christian authority. It breaks down as soon as a few penetrating questions are asked.

Calvin stands as a judge over councils, and this contradicts what he stated about it *not* being the case that “every one [is] at liberty to receive or reject the decrees of councils as he pleases.” Councils declare that such-and-such a doctrine is biblical and true; Calvin says it is not. We are supposed to bow and accept *his* authority as God’s Oracle? Yet he complains about the *popes* having too much theological pull and power and say?

And this I would do in such a way that the decision of the council should have its weight, and be regarded in the light of a prior judgment, yet not so as to prevent the application of the test which I have mentioned. I wish all had observed the method which Augustine prescribes in his Third Book against Maximinus, when he wished to silence the cavils of this heretic against the decrees of councils, “I ought not to oppose the Council of Nice to you, nor ought you to oppose that of Ariminum to me, as prejudging the question. I am not bound by the authority of the latter, nor you by that of the former. Let thing contend with thing, cause with cause, reason with reason, on the authority of Scripture, an authority not peculiar to either, but common to all.” In this way, councils would be duly respected, and yet the highest place would be given to Scripture, everything being brought to it as a test. (IV, 9:8)

This was the case precisely because Augustine was talking to a heretic, who rejected the authority of Nicaea (just as Protestants selectively do with all councils). Maximinus was an Arian bishop. They had to argue from Scripture because that was what they held in *common*. That is exactly what I do with Protestants, who reject conciliar infallibility.

As a Catholic apologist “being all things to all people,” I argue from Scripture 98% of the time, because my Protestant opponents accept the authority of Holy Scripture. I do the same with Jehovah’s Witnesses: today’s Arians. One must either cite Scripture with them or internal inconsistencies and false prophecies in their own published works. This was a methodological decision by St. Augustine, not a rejection of the same council’s authority.

But as matters usually become worse and worse, it is easy to see in more modern councils how much the Church gradually degenerated from the purity of that golden age. I doubt not, however, that even in those more corrupt ages, councils had their bishops of better character. But it happened with them as the Roman senators of old complained in regard to their decrees. Opinions being numbered, not weighed, the better were obliged to give way to the greater number. They certainly put forth many impious sentiments. There is no need here to collect instances, both because it would be tedious, and because it has been done by others so carefully, as not to leave much to be added. (IV, 9:8)

By what principle are later councils rejected? They were convoked by the same principles and authority as the earlier ones. All of a sudden what was “sacred” authority becomes the opposite? If these councils were protected by the Holy Spirit from error, then it stands to reason that others, convened in the same fashion, were also. But the early ecumenical councils that even Calvin reverences were orthodox because all were confirmed by popes as orthodox. By his time, councils had become completely corrupt; so argues Calvin, while rarely producing hard evidences for this alleged total defection from the faith (how convenient—and disappointing).

Moreover, why should I review the contests of council with council? Nor is there any ground for whispering to me, that when councils are at variance, one or other of them is not a lawful council. For how shall we ascertain this? Just, if I mistake not, by judging from Scripture that the decrees are not orthodox. For this alone is the sure law of discrimination. (IV, 9:9)

Lawful, orthodox councils are determined by seeing what Rome says about them. This was always the method (most notably with Chalcedon in 451, over against the “Robber Council” of Ephesus in 449). Men disagree on what is “orthodox” and on biblical interpretation. There has to be a final say somewhere. This is impossible to implement in practical terms without binding human Church authority.

[T]hough councils, otherwise pious and holy, were governed by the Holy Spirit, he yet allowed them to share the lot of humanity, lest we

should confide too much in men. (IV, 9:11)

This argument doesn't work, since many of the Bible writers were great sinners, too (especially David and Paul). Calvin doesn't conclude that the *Bible* is questionable because of that. In both instances God's protection overcomes limitations.

[T]he mode in which they lay consciences under the strict necessity of observing whatever they enjoin, is not unknown. When we protest against this, we make common cause with Paul, who will on no account allow the consciences of believers to be brought under human bondage. (IV, 10:9)

I guess, then, that the council of Jerusalem put consciences under "human bondage" since it decreed:

Acts 15:28–29 For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: [29] that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from unchastity. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell."

St. Paul promulgated this "human" decree:

Acts 16:4 As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions which had been reached by the apostles and elders who were at Jerusalem.

8. The Nature of St. Paul's Calling and Commissioning

The third division which we have adopted is, *by whom* ministers are to be chosen. A certain rule on this head cannot be obtained from the appointment of the apostles, which was somewhat different from the common call of others. As theirs was an extraordinary ministry, in order to render it conspicuous by some more distinguished mark, those who were to discharge it behoved to be called and appointed by the mouth of the Lord himself. It was not, therefore, by any human election,

but at the sole command of God and Christ, that they prepared themselves for the work. (IV, 3:13)

This was manifestly not true in Paul's case. In his very conversion experience, Jesus informed Paul that he would be told what to do (Acts 9:6; cf. 9:17). He went to see St. Peter in Jerusalem for fifteen days in order to be confirmed in his calling (Galatians 1:18), and fourteen years later was commissioned by Peter, James, and John (Galatians 2:1–2, 9). He was also sent out by the Church at Antioch (Acts 13:1–4), which was in contact with the Church at Jerusalem (Acts 11:19–27).

Later on, Paul reported back to Antioch (Acts 14:26–28). Acts 15:2 states that “Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.” The next verse refers to Paul and Barnabas “being sent on their way by the church.”

Paul and Barnabas are not shown as having any particular authority at all in the council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:4–30). The key figures were Peter (leader of the disciples) and James (bishop of Jerusalem). Paul and Barnabas get one line of attention in the biblical narrative: “they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles” (Acts 15:12).

They were then sent off, or commissioned by the assembly (15:22–27). Even after the council was over, Scripture informs us that Paul was preaching what it concluded: “As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions which had been reached by the apostles and elders who were at Jerusalem” (Acts 16:4). St. Paul was called by God but also called and confirmed and sent and directed by men.

In this way we ought to understand Paul's declaration, that he was made an apostle, “not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father” (Gal. 1:1). The former—viz. *not of men*—he had in common with all the pious ministers of the word, for no one could duly perform the office unless called by God. (IV, 3:13)

In his initial calling, this is true. But it doesn't follow that he was some “lone ranger”: not in submission to the Church, as has been amply shown.

Calvin himself even recognizes in the next section (IV, 3:14) that Paul was at least temporarily subjected to Church authority.

The other was proper and peculiar to him. And while he glories in it, he boasts that he had not only what pertains to a true and lawful pastor, but he also brings forward the insignia of his apostleship. For when there were some among the Galatians who, seeking to disparage his authority, represented him as some ordinary disciple, substituted in place of the primary apostles, he, in order to maintain unimpaired the dignity of his ministry, against which he knew that these attempts were made, felt it necessary to show that he was in no respect inferior to the other apostles. Accordingly, he affirms that he was not chosen by the judgment of men, like some ordinary bishop, but by the mouth and manifest oracle of the Lord himself. (IV, 3:13)

This analysis incorrectly excludes all the human elements of authority and calling, even in Paul's case, as outlined above. Calvin apparently sees here only what he *wants* to see. Perhaps this sort of weak reasoning is how he ultimately justified his own prominent position in early Protestantism. God alone called him; therefore he couldn't be properly opposed by anyone, and all who did that were God's enemies (precisely as Luther also thought).

9. Church Government According to the Early Church

As to the fact, that each province had an archbishop among the bishops (see chap. 7 sec. 15), and, moreover, that, in the Council of Nice, patriarchs were appointed to be superior to archbishops, in order and dignity, this was designed for the preservation of discipline, although, in treating of the subject here, it ought not to be omitted, that the practice was very rare. The chief reason for which these orders were instituted was, that if anything occurred in any church which could not well be explicated by a few, it might be referred to a provincial synod. If the magnitude or difficulty of the case demanded a larger discussion, patriarchs were employed along with synods, and from them there was no appeal except to a General Council. (IV, 4:4)

But this is already clearly Catholic authority. Calvin does his best to minimize it, but it is unmistakable. Nor is it possible for him to be unaware that issues of orthodoxy are also involved. Why, then, if this was early Church polity, does Calvin not seek to emulate it? I think it can be demonstrated that the reason is simply that it clashes with his novel rule of faith: *sola Scriptura* and private judgment. When that innovation is introduced, an infallible Church, or at least one with binding, final authority, necessarily must be dispatched. It's like oil and water: they cannot coexist and be harmonious with each other.

To the government thus constituted some gave the name of Hierarchy —a name, in my opinion, improper, certainly one not used by Scripture. (IV, 4:4)

Trinity doesn't appear in Scripture, either. The *term* is irrelevant. What matters is if the *concept* is present.

For the Holy Spirit designed to provide that no one should dream of primacy or domination in regard to the government of the Church. But if, disregarding the term, we look to the thing, we shall find that the ancient bishops had no wish to frame a form of church government different from that which God has prescribed in his word. (IV, 4:4)

That's right; and this government was hierarchical, episcopal, and papal. Calvin can't force the historical reality into being something other than what it actually was. The fact is that he is in radical dissent from early, patristic, medieval, and Catholic ecclesiology. The historical facts contradict him at every turn. This is especially the case with regard to the papacy. Protestant historian J. N. D. Kelly makes it abundantly clear that Roman primacy was quite evident in the early Church:

Everywhere, in the East no less than the West, Rome enjoyed a special prestige, as is indicated by the precedence accorded without question to it.... Thus Rome's preeminence remained undisputed in the patristic period. For evidence of it the student need only recall the leading position claimed as a matter of course by the popes, and freely conceded to them, at the councils of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451). We even find the fifth-century historians Socrates and Sozomen concluding

... that it was unconstitutional for synods to be held without the Roman pontiff being invited or for decisions to be taken without his concurrence. At the outbreak of the Christological controversy, it will be remembered, both Nestorius and Cyril hastened to bring their cases to Rome, the latter declaring that the ancient custom of the churches constrained him to communicate matters of such weight to the Pope and to seek his advice before acting. In one of his sermons he goes so far as to salute Celestine as 'the archbishop of the whole world' ... It goes without saying that Augustine [c. 354–430 AD] identifies the Church with the universal Catholic Church of his day, with its hierarchy and sacraments, and with its centre at Rome ... By the middle of the fifth century the Roman church had established, *de jure* as well as *de facto*, a position of primacy in the West, and the papal claims to supremacy over all bishops of Christendom had been formulated in precise terms.... The student tracing the history of the times, particularly of the Arian, Donatist, Pelagian and Christological controversies, cannot fail to be impressed by the skill and persistence with which the Holy See [of Rome] was continually advancing and consolidating its claims. Since its occupant was accepted as the successor of St. Peter, and prince of the apostles, it was easy to draw the inference that the unique authority which Rome in fact enjoyed, and which the popes saw concentrated in their persons and their office, was no more than the fulfilment of the divine plan.

(*Early Christian Doctrines*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, fifth revised edition, 1978, 406–407, 413, 417)

In electing bishops, the people long retained their right of preventing any one from being intruded who was not acceptable to all. Accordingly, it was forbidden by the Council of Antioch to induct any one on the unwilling. This also Leo I. carefully confirms. Hence these passages: "Let him be elected whom the clergy and people or the majority demand." Again. "Let him who is to preside over all be elected by all" (Leo, Ep. 90, cap. 2). He, therefore, who is appointed while unknown and unexamined, must of necessity be violently intruded. Again, "Let him be elected who is chosen by the clergy, and called by the people, and let him be consecrated by the provincials with the judgment

of the metropolitan.” So careful were the holy fathers that this liberty of the people should on no account be diminished, that when a general council, assembled at Constantinople, were ordaining Nectarius, they declined to do it without the approbation of the whole clergy and people, as their letter to the Roman synod testified. Accordingly, when any bishop nominated his successor, the act was not ratified without consulting the whole people. Of this you have not only an example, but the form, in Augustine, in the nomination of Eradius (August. Ep. 110). And Theodoret, after relating that Peter was the successor nominated by Athanasius, immediately adds, that the sacerdotal order ratified it, that the magistracy, chief men, and whole people, by their acclamation approved. (IV, 4:11)

Granting that this was the case (and I have no particular reason to doubt Calvin’s account of it), it still doesn’t follow that the bishop had no *authority* over the people, or could be removed at a whim. Presidents and Senators are elected in the United States, and then they have authority. Supreme Court Justices (a closer parallel) are nominated by the elected President and confirmed by the elected Senators, but then they have lifetime legal authority.

Thus, while Calvin may milk this point for all it’s worth, it provides no undermining whatever of the hierarchical structure of the Church or the binding authority of the Church, over against his (and Luther’s) new rule of faith: *sola Scriptura*.

None of this history (assuming it is accurate) need be denied, but it is ultimately inconclusive with regard to Calvin’s teachings and actions in opposition to the hierarchy of the Church. Of what consequence is it to go over details of a thing, if one intends to overthrow the *entire* thing and replace it with something else? That being the case, it is the *revolution* that needs to be justified, not the minutiae relating to the thing overthrown.

The facts of Church history show that by the 4th–6th centuries, the functions of bishops were virtually identical to what they are in the Catholic Church today. Protestant historian Philip Schaff describes the situation in the period of 311–590:

The bishops now stood with sovereign power at the head of the clergy and of their dioceses. They had come to be universally regarded as the

vehicles and propagators of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and the teachers and lawgivers of the church in all matters of faith and discipline. The specific distinction between them and the presbyters was carried into everything; ...

The traditional participation of the people in the election, which attested the popular origin of the episcopal office, still continued, but gradually sank to a mere formality, and at last became entirely extinct. The bishops filled their own vacancies, and elected and ordained the clergy. Besides ordination, as the medium for communicating the official gifts, they also claimed from the presbyters in the West, after the fifth century, the exclusive prerogatives of confirming the baptized and consecrating the chrism or holy ointment used in baptism....

(History of the Christian Church, Vol. III, Chapter Five: "The Hierarchy and Polity of the Church," § 53. The Bishops)

This was how the Mind of the Church (after a few centuries' reflection) decided the question (and Calvin admits to at least partial validity and sensibility of this in his next section).

10. Equating of the Offices of Presbyter, Pastor, and Bishop

In giving the name of bishops, presbyters, and pastors, indiscriminately to those who govern churches, I have done it on the authority of Scripture, which uses the words as synonymous. To all who discharge the ministry of the word it gives the name of bishops. (IV, 3:8)

Although there is indeed some overlap of terms and a less-than-rigid classification system in Scripture, still, bishops are said to have certain tasks that go beyond those of priests / pastors. Bishops (*episkopos*) possess all the powers, duties, and jurisdiction of priests, with the following important additional responsibilities:

Jurisdiction over Priests and Local Churches, and the Power to Ordain Priests: Acts 14:22, 1 Timothy 5:22, 2 Timothy 1:6, Titus 1:5.

Special Responsibility to Defend the Faith: Acts 20:28–31, 2 Timothy 4:1–5, Titus 1:9–10, 2 Peter 3:15–16.

Power to Rebuke False Doctrine and Excommunicate: Acts 8:14–24, 1 Corinthians 16:22, 1 Timothy 5:20, 2 Timothy 4:2, Titus 1:10–11.

Power to Bestow Confirmation (the Receiving of the Indwelling Holy Spirit): Acts 8:14–17, 19:5–6.

Management of Church Finances: 1 Timothy 3:3–4, 1 Peter 5:2.

In the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament), *episkopos* is used for overseer in various senses, for example: officers (Judges 9:28, Isaiah 60:17), supervisors of funds (2 Chronicles 34:12, 17), overseers of priests and Levites (Nehemiah 11:9, 2 Kings 11:18), and of temple and tabernacle functions (Numbers 4:16). God is called *episkopos* at Job 20:29, referring to His role as Judge, and Christ is an *episkopos* in 1 Peter 2:25 (RSV: “Shepherd and Guardian of your souls”).

The council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:1–29) bears witness to a definite hierarchical, episcopal structure of government in the early Church. St. Peter, the chief elder (the office of pope) of the entire Church (1 Peter 5:1; cf. John 21:15–17), presided and issued the authoritative pronouncement (15:7–11). Then James, bishop of Jerusalem (kind of like the host-mayor of a conference) gives a concurring (Acts 15:14), concluding statement (15:13–29).

That James was the sole, “monarchical” bishop of Jerusalem is fairly apparent from Scripture (Acts 12:17, 15:13, 19, 21:18, Galatians 1:19, 2:12). This fact is also attested by the first Christian historian, Eusebius (*History of the Church*, 7:19).

Much historical and patristic evidence also exists for the bishopric of St. Peter at Rome. No one disputes the fact that St. Clement (d. c.101) was the sole bishop of Rome a little later, or that St. Ignatius (d. c.110) was the bishop at Antioch, starting around 69 A. D. Thus, the “monarchical” bishop is both a biblical concept and an unarguable fact of the early Church. By the time we get to the mid-second century, virtually all historians hold that single bishops led each Christian community.

To all who discharge the ministry of the word it gives the name of bishops. Thus Paul, after enjoining Titus to ordain elders in every city, immediately adds, “A bishop must be blameless,” &c. (Tit. 1:5, 7). (IV, 3:8)

Note that Timothy is functioning precisely as a Catholic bishop does, by appointing elders (or priests):

Titus 1:5 ... appoint elders in every town as I directed you

Thus, Titus is under the authority of *Paul*, and others are under *his* authority. That is a three-tiered hierarchical structure, any way one looks at it. Therefore, even if the terms somewhat overlap in the New Testament, as the Church was just beginning, nevertheless we see differentiation in *actual duties*, which is essentially all that is needed to establish Catholic ecclesiology.

Furthermore, Paul appears to be passing on his office to Timothy (1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:6, 13–14; 2 Tim 4:1–6), and tells him to pass his office along, in turn (2 Tim 2:1–2) which would be another indication of apostolic succession in the Bible.

So in another place he salutes several bishops in one church (Phil. 1:1). (IV, 3:8)

But in this passage he mentions “bishops and deacons.” He is careful to distinguish them elsewhere, since he mentions the qualifications of bishops, specifically, in Titus 1 and 1 Timothy 3:1–7. But then he separately writes about the qualifications for deacons in 1 Timothy 3:8–10. Thus, if he makes this differentiation, it stands to reason that he probably does the same with regard to elders. Also, Paul often referred to himself as a deacon or minister (1 Cor 3:5; 4:1; 2 Cor 3:6; 6:4; 11:23; Eph 3:7; Col 1:23–25), yet no one would say he was *merely* a deacon.

And in the Acts, the elders of Ephesus, whom he is said to have called together, he, in the course of his address, designates as bishops (Acts 20:17). (IV, 3:8)

A bishop is a chief elder, just as in the Catholic Church, a bishop is also a priest. He is a sort of super-priest. A bishop can still be called a priest, but

priests cannot be called bishops unless they *are* bishops! And who appoints bishops? The pope does that. In Calvin's ecclesiology he have apostles appointing bishops, but their office doesn't continue, since he denies apostolic succession. How, then, are they appointed today; by *whom*, with neither apostles nor popes? By majority vote of congregations? That isn't found in Holy Scripture. Or do they simply appoint themselves and take on an air of "authority"—as in Calvin's case?

Martin Luther made the same error of jumbling up into one big catch-all category, all of these New Testament offices:

On this account I think it follows that we neither can nor ought to give the name priest to those who are in charge of Word and sacrament among the people. The reason they have been called priests is either because of the custom of heathen people or as a vestige of the Jewish nation. The result is greatly injurious to the church. According to the New Testament Scriptures *better names would be ministers, deacons, bishops, stewards, presbyters* (a name often used and indicating the older members). For thus Paul writes in 1 Cor. 4 [:1], "This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God." He does not say, "as priests of Christ," because he knew that the name and office of priest belonged to all. Paul's frequent use of the word "stewardship" or "household," "ministry," "minister," "servant," "one serving the gospel," etc., emphasizes that it is not the estate, or order, or any authority or dignity that he wants to uphold, but only the office and the function. The authority and the dignity of the priesthood resided in the community of believers.

(*Luther's Works*, Vol. 40: *Church and Ministry II*, edited by Conrad Bergendoff, Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1958, p. 35; primary work: *Concerning the Ministry*, 1523, translated by Conrad Bergendoff; my italics)

What persons should be elected bishops is treated at length by Paul in two passages (Tit. 1:7; 1 Tim. 3:1). The substance is, that none are to be chosen save those who are of sound doctrine and holy lives, and not notorious for any defect which might destroy their authority and bring disgrace on the ministry. (IV, 3:12)

But who chooses, or “elects” them? This difficulty in Calvin’s ecclesiology was already discussed above.

The description of deacons and elders is entirely similar (see chapter 4 sec. 10–13). We must always take care that they are not unfit for or unequal to the burden imposed upon them; in other words, that they are provided with the means which will be necessary to fulfil their office. Thus our Saviour, when about to send his apostles, provided them with the arms and instruments which were indispensably requisite. And Paul, after portraying the character of a good and genuine bishop, admonishes Timothy not to contaminate himself by choosing an improper person for the office. (IV, 3:12)

Here is Church hierarchy again: Paul is over Timothy, who is over those whom he appoints. But if there is no successor to Paul the Apostle (Catholic say bishops are that), then who would tell Timothy what to do, and who would appoint him?

The expression, *in what way*, I use not in reference to the rite of choosing, but only to the religious fear which is to be observed in election. Hence the fastings and prayers which Luke narrates that the faithful employed when they elected presbyters (*Acts 14:23*). For, understanding that the business was the most serious in which they could engage, they did not venture to act without the greatest reverence and solicitude. But above all, they were earnest in prayer, imploring from God the spirit of wisdom and discernment. (IV, 3:12)

Elders were appointed from above, according to this very passage.

11. Can Laymen Declare Clergy Illegitimate?

Let no man, however, understand me as if I were desirous in everything rashly and unreservedly to overthrow the authority of pastors. All I advise is, to exercise discrimination, and not suppose, as a matter of course, that all who call themselves pastors are so in reality. (IV, 9:5)

Calvin retains some measure of authority and institution; especially when *he*—like Luther before him—gets to be boss and proclaim true

theology, but the interior logic of private judgment undermines both the authority of pastors, as well as individual denominations as a whole.

No Protestant can tell another Protestant that they don't have a right to go to another denomination. That would be a joke. On what grounds would they argue? "We have the fullness of Christian truth over against all those other denominations"? That would be hardly distinguishable from the Catholic claim to unique fullness, and so it is self-defeating in the end. Protestant epistemologies and self-justifications are always and inherently at war with the various Protestant ecclesiologies.

But the Pope, with the whole crew of his bishops, for no other reason but because they are called pastors, shake off obedience to the word of God, invert all things, and turn them hither and thither at their pleasure; meanwhile, they insist that they cannot be destitute of the light of truth, that the Spirit of God perpetually resides in them, that the Church subsists in them, and dies with them, as if the Lord did not still inflict his judgments, and in the present day punish the world for its wickedness, in the same way in which he punished the ingratitude of the ancient people—namely, by smiting pastors with astonishment and blindness (Zech. 12:4). (IV, 9:5)

The Old Testament "Church" never completely died out; nor will the Catholic Church. It continues because God promised that it would be so. The Church is indefectible.

12. Denigration of the Vows and Oaths of Consecration

Hence arises a doubt with regard to vows which are made without any express authority from the word of God; in what light are they to be viewed? can they be duly made by Christian men, and to what extent are they binding? What is called a promise among men is a vow when made to God. Now, we promise to men either things which we think will be acceptable to them, or things which we in duty owe them. Much more careful, therefore, ought we to be in vows which are directed to God, with whom we ought to act with the greatest seriousness. Here superstition has in all ages strangely prevailed; men at once, without

judgment and without choice, vowing to God whatever came into their minds, or even rose to their lips. Hence the foolish vows, nay, monstrous absurdities, by which the heathen insolently sported with their gods. Would that Christians had not imitated them in this their audacity! Nothing, indeed, could be less becoming; but it is obvious that for some ages nothing has been more usual than this misconduct—the whole body of the people everywhere despising the Law of God, and burning with an insane zeal of vowing according to any dreaming notion which they had formed. I have no wish to exaggerate invidiously, or particularise the many grievous sins which have here been committed; but it seemed right to advert to it in passing, that it may the better appear, that when we treat of vows we are not by any means discussing a superfluous question.

(IV, 13:1)

Now, then, let us see the nature of the vows by which the monks of the present day are initiated into this famous order. First, as their intention is to institute a new and fictitious worship with a view to gain favour with God, I conclude from what has been said above, that everything which they vow is abomination to God. Secondly, I hold that as they frame their own mode of life at pleasure, without any regard to the calling of God, or to his approbation, the attempt is rash and unlawful; because their conscience has no ground on which it can support itself before God; and “whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23). Moreover, I maintain that in astringing themselves to many perverse and impious modes of worship, such as are exhibited in modern monasticism, they consecrate themselves not to God but to the devil. For why should the prophets have been permitted to say that the Israelites sacrificed their sons to devils and not to God (Deut 32:17; Ps. 106:37), merely because they had corrupted the true worship of God by profane ceremonies; and we not be permitted to say the same thing of monks who, along with the cowl, cover themselves with the net of a thousand impious superstitions? (IV, 13:17)

Calvin paints Catholic things (as is his wont) in the darkest colors imaginable, with sweeping terms and dramatic flourishes, leading to a

conclusion that the thing in question (here, vows), presented as a gross caricature of actual reality, should be essentially eliminated. But vows have a strong biblical basis. They simply need to be correctly understood and applied in the lives of people: not scorned and ditched altogether. Vows and oaths have a perfectly biblical basis. Here are three Protestant sources that verify this:

It is no sin to vow or not to vow, but if made ... a vow is as sacredly binding as an oath (Deut 23:21–23) ... The seriousness of oaths is emphasized in the laws of Moses (Ex 20:7, Lev 19:12) ... Ezekiel speaks as if perjury were punishable by death (Ezek 17:16 ff.) ... Christ taught that oaths were binding (Matt 5:33) ... Christ himself accepted the imprecatory oath (Matt 26:63 ff.), and Paul also swore by an oath (2 Cor 1:23, Gal 1:20) ... God bound himself by an oath (Heb. 6:13–18).

(J. D. Douglas, editor, *The New Bible Dictionary*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1962, 1313, 902)

Oaths were solemn commitments and not to be taken lightly. The 3rd commandment of the Decalog forbids oaths that are made thoughtlessly (Ex 20:7, Deut 5:11); the 9th commandment forbids perjury. An oath must be fulfilled ... (Ecc 5:4–5).

(Allen C. Myers, editor, *Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1987 [English revision of *Bijbelse Encyclopedie*, edited by W. H. Gispen, Kampen, Netherlands: J. H. Kok, revised edition, 1975], translated by Raymond C. Togtman & Ralph W. Vunderink, 773–774)

The apostle Paul ... had his hair cut off ... ‘for he had taken a vow’ (Acts 18:18) ... Vowing was voluntary. But after a vow was made, it had to be performed ... Deception in vowing is an affront to God and brings His curse (Mal 1:14) ... Lying about an oath could result in death (Ezek 17:16–18). Jesus Himself was bound by an oath (Matt 26:63–4), as was Paul (2 Cor 1:23, Gal 1:20). Even God bound Himself by an oath.

(Herbert, Lockyer, Sr., editor, *Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Nashville: Nelson, 1986, 1088, 767)

Do not suppose, however, that I so commend the vows which I maintain to be holy that I would have them made every day. For though I dare not give any precept as to time or number, yet if any one will take my advice, he will not undertake any but what are sober and temporary. If you bind yourself by a perpetual vow, you will have great trouble and annoyance in getting free, or, worn out by length of time, you will at length make bold to break it. (IV, 13:6)

What becomes of *marriage* vows, then? This reasoning (willingly or not) undermines marriage and lifelong commitment to the priesthood, to the religious life, or to the Protestant sense of pastoral ordination. Obviously, I submit, such reasoning “proves too much” and must be rejected.

It has been the practice (they say) from the remotest period, for those who wished to devote themselves entirely to God, to bind themselves by a vow of continence. I confess that the custom is ancient, but I do not admit that the age when it commenced was so free from every defect that all that was then done is to be regarded as a rule. Moreover, the inexorable rigour of holding that after the vow is conceived there is no room for repentance, crept in gradually. (IV, 13:17)

For Catholics, a vow is a vow. Even today, there is some semblance left of the high importance and binding nature of biblical vows, in the marriage ceremony. Calvin simply doesn't have enough faith to grasp that a man could be called to a life of celibacy in service to God, *know* that he is so called (somewhat like how we “know” that we are “called” to marry a particular person), and thus, be able to make the vow, by God's power.

If a monk or priest declares that he wrongly took a vow, then he can be dismissed from the priesthood or the religious life. Thus, “exceptions” can be dealt with individually. This is no disproof of the entire lifestyle: that some *abuse* it or are mistaken.

There have been fake Protestant evangelists who were only in it for the money (Marjoe Gortner was a famous example in our times). Does that mean there are no *real* evangelists? Of course not. Yet this is how Calvin reasons: “there is corruption; indeed widespread corruption; therefore the thing itself is illegitimate, wicked through and through; of the devil.”

Calvin not only rejects these vows of calling and fuller devotion to God, but also far lesser vows such as abstinence from wine: a perfectly biblical concept:

It is now easy to see under how much superstition the world has laboured in this respect for several ages. One vowed that he would be abstemious, as if abstinence from wine were in itself an acceptable service to God. (IV, 13:7)

Calvin here thinks like the Pharisees: the arbitrariness of whom our Lord criticized:

Luke 7:33–34 For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine; and you say, ‘He has a demon.’ [34] The Son of man has come eating and drinking; and you say, ‘Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’

God (contrary to Calvin) seemed to think that such abstinence (far from necessarily or always a “superstition”) was a good and spiritually useful thing:

Leviticus 10:8–10 And the LORD spoke to Aaron, saying, [9] “Drink no wine nor strong drink, you nor your sons with you, when you go into the tent of meeting, lest you die; it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations. [10] You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean;

Numbers 6:1–4 And the LORD said to Moses, [2] “Say to the people of Israel, When either a man or a woman makes a special vow, the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself to the LORD, [3] he shall separate himself from wine and strong drink; he shall drink no vinegar made from wine or strong drink, and shall not drink any juice of grapes or eat grapes, fresh or dried. [4] All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, not even the seeds or the skins. (cf. Judges 13:4, 7; Jer 35:6–14)

Luke 1:15 for he will be great before the Lord, and he shall drink no wine nor strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb.

13. Clerical Celibacy

Paul terms the prohibition of marriage a doctrine of devils (1 Tim. 4:1, 3); and the Spirit elsewhere declares that “marriage is honourable in all” (Heb. 13:4). Having afterwards interdicted their priests from marriage, they insist on this as a true and genuine interpretation of Scripture, though nothing can be imagined more alien to it. (IV, 9:14)

St. Paul assumes and defends celibacy in those who want to fully devote themselves to the Lord. His teaching is plain as day in 1 Corinthians 7. Jesus also refers to “eunuchs” for the sake of the kingdom:

Matthew 19:10–12 The disciples said to him, “If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is not expedient to marry.” [11] But he said to them, “Not all men can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. [12] For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it.”

None of this is particularly difficult to comprehend. Obviously, Calvin and many Protestants are among those who can’t “receive” this plain teaching of Jesus. They are unwilling to accept certain parts of inspired divine revelation. Catholics show no such reluctance and lack of faith and trust in God’s designs.

The Bible and the Christian faith are not about what we prefer or find easy or pleasurable, but rather, about what is true and good. The fact remains that both Jesus and Paul sanction and praise celibacy. They were celibates themselves, after all. Whether Calvin or anyone else doesn’t like these facts and would prefer them to be otherwise is utterly irrelevant.

Was it the part of bishops to entangle themselves with the cognisance of causes, and the administration of states and provinces, and embrace occupations so very alien to them—of bishops, who require so much time and labour in their own office, that though they devote themselves to it diligently and entirely, without distraction from other avocations, they are scarcely sufficient? (IV, 11:9)

Calvin rails against bishops getting directly involved in secular politics (with some good cause) on the grounds that they “require so much time and labour in their own office” and need to do their work “without distraction”—yet on the other hand, he objects to clerical celibacy: for which the rationale is largely the same, since Paul expressly teaches that “the married man is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please his wife” (1 Cor 7:33), and that “the unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord” (1 Cor 7:32), and that celibacy is excellent in order to secure “undivided devotion to the Lord” (1 Cor 7:35). It’s one of many of his internal inconsistencies.

In one thing they are more than rigid and inexorable—in not permitting priests to marry. It is of no consequence to mention with what impunity whoredom prevails among them, and how, trusting to their vile celibacy, they have become callous to all kinds of iniquity. The prohibition, however, clearly shows how pestiferous all traditions are, since this one has not only deprived the Church of fit and honest pastors, but has introduced a fearful sink of iniquity, and plunged many souls into the gulf of despair. Certainly, when marriage was interdicted to priests, it was done with impious tyranny, not only contrary to the word of God, but contrary to all justice. First, men had no title whatever to forbid what God had left free; secondly, it is too clear to make it necessary to give any lengthened proof that God has expressly provided in his Word that this liberty shall not be infringed.... what could be stronger than his declaration, that in the latter days there would be impious men “forbidding to marry”? (1 Tim. 4:3). (IV, 12:23)

Catholics do not forbid anyone to marry, strictly speaking. The Church simply says that she (and not even in its entirety, as Eastern Catholics allow married priests) wishes to draw for her priests exclusively from that portion of men who are already called by God to celibacy (1 Cor 7:17), in order to secure an undistracted devotion to the Lord (1 Cor 7:32, 35).

The Church is not approaching a man who wants to be married and forbidding him to do so (i.e., going against his existing vocation and station in life); rather, she is receiving men who voluntarily follow the divine vocation of celibacy and who are voluntarily following a call by God to be priests.

Calvin simply assumes that Catholic celibacy is akin to the pseudo-ascetic extreme sects like the Manichaeans and Gnostics and (later) Albigensians and suchlike. The Catholic Church is following the advice of St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 7. If Calvin doesn't like that, he ought to oppose St. Paul himself, rather than Catholics. Many Protestant commentaries agree with my assessment of 1 Timothy 4:3, over against Calvin:

The ascetic tendencies indicated by these prohibitions developed earlier than these Epistles among the Essenes ... who repudiated marriage except as a necessity for preserving the race, and allowed it only under protest and under stringent regulations ... The prohibitions above named were imposed by the later Gnosticism of the second century.

(Marvin Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1980 [originally 1887], Vol. IV, 245)

See Col. 2:16, 21f., where Paul condemns the ascetic practices of the Gnostics. The Essenes, Therapeutae and other oriental sects forbade marriage. In 1 Cor. 7 Paul does not condemn marriage.

(A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1931, Vol. IV, 578)

The assertions of these verses are significant when studied in relation to the Gnostic and dualistic views that matter is evil and not created by God.

(*The Eerdmans Bible Commentary*, edited by D. Guthrie et al, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 3rd edition, 1970, 1173)

All institutions impose rules and regulations. All organizations have entrance requirements. It's a part of life. The Catholic Church has a perfect right under God to impose this restriction, based on the teachings of St. Paul and our Lord Jesus.

St. Paul seemed to think that celibacy was a desired spiritual state, as long as one is called to it. Jesus was single. All of His disciples appear to have been also (Peter seems to have agreed with his wife to separate for the sake of ministry). We treasure celibacy and we treasure marriage (making

it a sacrament, whereas Calvin and Luther removed sacramentality from it). This is the biblical, Pauline, “both/and” point of view.

But Calvin has no place for Paul’s extolling of celibacy for the sake of greater service to the Lord, in his system. Which outlook, then, is more biblical and well-rounded? Calvinism and general Protestantism don’t have much of a tradition of single pastors. They accept half of Paul’s teaching and not the other, and this is the problem. What would Calvin do with the following passage from the lips of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?:

Luke 18:28–30 And Peter said, “Lo, we have *left our homes* and followed you.” [29] And he said to them, “Truly, I say to you, there is no man who has left house or *wife* or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, [30] who will not receive manifold more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life.”

Why should we Catholics disagree with Jesus? The Catholic Church is not even requiring *this* much. She doesn’t command a man to leave his wife or children or parents. Rather, she accepts men who have already felt the call or vocation of celibacy. Again, Calvin’s beef is with Jesus Himself, Who sanctioned far more of a “deprivation of liberty” or “imprisoning conscience” than the Catholic Church ever supposedly did.

Elsewhere, however, Calvin seems to understand the concept of a vow made according to a calling from God:

For in nothing ought we to be more serious than in the duties of religion. In vows, then, our first precaution must be, never to proceed to make any vow without having previously determined in our conscience to attempt nothing rashly. And we shall be safe from the danger of rashness when we have God going before, and, as it were, dictating from his word what is good, and what is useless. (IV, 13:2)

In the second point which we have mentioned as requiring consideration is implied, that we measure our strength, that we attend to our vocation so as not to neglect the blessing of liberty which God has conferred upon us. For he who vows what is not within his means, or is at variance with his calling, is rash, while he who contemns the beneficence of God in making him lord of all things, is ungrateful.

When I speak thus, I mean not that anything is so placed in our hand, that, leaning on our own strength, we may promise it to God. For in the Council of Arausica (cap. 11) it was most truly decreed, that nothing is duly vowed to God save what we have received from his hand, since all things which are offered to him are merely his gifts. But seeing that some things are given to us by the goodness of God, and others withheld by his justice, every man should have respect to the measure of grace bestowed on him, as Paul enjoins (Rom. 12:3; 1 Cor. 12:11). All then I mean here is, that your vows should be adapted to the measure which God by his gifts prescribes to you, lest by attempting more than he permits, you arrogate too much to yourself, and fall headlong. (IV, 13:3)

Having stated such true and undeniable Christian principles, Calvin then immediately reverts to anti-Catholic absurdities:

Of this class, the first place of insane audacity belongs to celibacy. Priests, monks, and nuns, forgetful of their infirmity, are confident of their fitness for celibacy. But by what oracle have they been instructed, that the chastity which they vow to the end of life, they will be able through life to maintain? They hear the voice of God concerning the universal condition of mankind, "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Gen. 2:18). (IV, 13:3)

Obviously, it is not "universal," or else Jesus wouldn't have noted its *non*-universality (Matthew 19); nor would Paul have done so (1 Corinthians 7), nor would Jesus, His disciples, John the Baptist, and many other holy men and women, have been celibate.

They understand, and I wish they did not feel that the sin remaining in us is armed with the sharpest stings. How can they presume to shake off the common feelings of their nature for a whole lifetime, seeing the gift of continence is often granted for a certain time as occasion requires? (IV, 13:3)

They do so because God *called* them to it; therefore He continues to enable them to fulfill the vow:

1 Corinthians 7:17, 20, 24 Only, let every one lead the life which the Lord has assigned to him, and in which God has called him. This is my

rule in all the churches.... [20] Every one should remain in the state in which he was called.... [24] So, brethren, in whatever state each was called, there let him remain with God.

1 Corinthians 12:4–6, 11 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; [5] and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; [6] and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one.... [11] All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

Philippians 2:13 for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things in him who strengthens me.

Calvin either lacks faith that God is able to do these things in human beings, or he is oddly unfamiliar with biblical passages such as the ones above.

This they not only do, but marriage, which God did not think it unbecoming his majesty to institute, which he pronounced honourable in all, which Christ our Lord sanctified by his presence, and which he deigned to honour with his first miracle, they presume to stigmatise as pollution, (IV, 13:3)

This is fallacious “either/or” reasoning. Catholicism is caricatured as devaluing marriage simply because it recognizes (like Paul and Jesus) *also* a category of celibacy and being “married to the Lord.” The problem obviously resides with Calvin’s unbiblical logic and with people who take this vow that have no business doing so. Neither “problem” casts into doubt the veracity of the principle and the calling *itself*.

Then what is their species of vows? They offer God a promise of perpetual virginity, as if they had previously made a compact with him to free them from the necessity of marriage. They cannot allege that they make this vow trusting entirely to the grace of God; for, seeing he declares this to be a special gift not given to all (Mt. 19:11), no man has a right to assume that the gift will be his. (IV, 13:17)

If God calls them to it (1 Cor 7; Matthew 19), then it is altogether proper for them to make such a vow. It is simply obedience to God's will. But as Jesus said, not all men can "receive" this teaching. If the gift is present to some, what sense does it make that none to whom the gift is given can *discern* it? What God desires, He makes *known* to the men included in the plan that He has ordained. Otherwise, it is senseless to bring up the topic at all.

We know that there are such things as eunuchs for the kingdom's sake, yet (according to Calvin) no one can figure out if he *is* one? What sense does that make? Because the gift is not for all, therefore, no one can possibly *know* that he is of the group that is the exception, and cannot possibly make a vow, sincerely, in faith, trusting God? How in the world does *that* follow?

Let those who have it use it; and if at any time they feel the infirmity of the flesh, let them have recourse to the aid of him by whose power alone they can resist. (IV, 13:17)

It is not impossible to vow to be celibate. If it were so, every unmarried man must necessarily be a fornicator, since he is utterly unable to be chaste, even with God's help. If a young man at the height of his sexual desire can remain sexually pure with God's help, before he is married, why can't an older monk to do the same thing? If one thing is possible, so is the other, all the more so, and especially since God promises that we can do all things by His strength. But if one lacks faith in God's power and promises, then one arrives at doctrines such as what Calvin spouts: a wholesale denigration of celibacy and monasticism.

At the same time, they have another defence if they were unfit for celibacy. For if an impossible vow is certain destruction to the soul, which God wills to be saved and not destroyed, it follows that it ought by no means to be adhered to. Now, how impossible the vow of continence is to those who have not received it by special gift, we have shown, and experience, even were I silent, declares: while the great obscenity with which almost all monasteries teem is a thing not unknown. (IV, 13:21)

Who says it is impossible? Many biblical examples refute this. But now Calvin is talking out of both sides of his mouth. It's possible for some to be chaste, yet the whole system, nevertheless, is of the devil and superstition, anyway, so it doesn't matter. Therefore, even the most observant, conscientious, "good" monk is a servant of Satan and a dupe, whether he knows it or not.

For what other name can we give it, when a man, admonished of his need of marriage, and of the remedy with which the Lord has thereby furnished, not only despises it, but binds himself by an oath to despise it? (IV, 13:21)

Calvin again draws the same conclusions based on false premises. We don't throw out the baby with the dirty bathwater. We discard the bad thing and keep the good thing. Anyone who "despises" marriage should not be a monk, because the monastic ideal is not based on despising the married state (which is a sacrament in Catholicism and means of grace) but rather, on following whatever one's calling is, and (in this instance) seeking a life fully devoted to God, based on sole allegiance to Him, and not the divided allegiances that every married person has (as Paul explained in 1 Corinthians 7).

14. Justification of the Protestant Schism

Let them now go and clamour against us as heretics for having withdrawn from their Church, since the only cause of our estrangement is, that they cannot tolerate a pure profession of the truth. I say nothing of their having expelled us by anathemas and curses. The fact is more than sufficient to excuse us, unless they would also make schismatics of the apostles, with whom we have a common cause. (IV, 2:6)

Calvin begs the question. Anathemas are quite a biblical thing (e.g., Rom 16:17; 1 Cor 16:22; Gal 1:8–9; 2 Thess 3:6; 1 Tim 1:19–20; 5:20; 2 Tim 2:16–18; Titus 1:10–11; 3:10–11), and he himself admits this (see Part Two). Sectarianism, divisiveness, and denominations are constantly condemned in Holy Scripture, especially by St. Paul (e.g., Rom 2:8; 13:13; 1 Cor 1:10–13; 3:3–4; 11:16–19; 12:25; 1 Tim 6:3–5). Calvin elsewhere condemns schism as well.

Christ, I say, forewarned his apostles, “they shall put you out of the synagogues” (John 16:2). The synagogues of which he speaks were then held to be lawful churches. Seeing then it is certain that we were cast out, (IV, 2:6)

Protestants cast *themselves* out, by refusing to abide by received apostolic tradition and the authority and standard of orthodoxy that had always existed since Christ (not to mention abandonment of vows on the part of most of the Protestant founders). In Luther’s case, for example, he dissented on at least fifty matters of Catholic doctrine and practice before he was ever excommunicated (this was all by the year 1520).

It is utterly unreasonable to expect any belief system whatever, religious or otherwise, to change fifty of its tenets, simply because one dissident demands that they do so. Therefore, it is absurd for Protestants to act as if they were unfairly tossed out of the Church. They freely chose to leave, by refusing to accept many Catholic teachings. It was a revolt, pure and simple.

The place which we ought to assign to all the churches on which the tyranny of the Romish idol has seized will better appear if we compare them with the ancient Israelitish Church, as delineated by the prophets. So long as the Jews and Israelites persisted in the laws of the covenant, a true Church existed among them; in other words, they by the kindness of God obtained the benefits of a Church. True doctrine was contained in the law, and the ministry of it was committed to the prophets and priests. They were initiated in religion by the sign of circumcision, and by the other sacraments trained and confirmed in the faith. There can be no doubt that the titles with which the Lord honoured his Church were applicable to their society. After they forsook the law of the Lord, and degenerated into idolatry and superstition, they partly lost the privilege. (IV, 2:7)

David murdered and committed adultery, but that didn’t cause God to withdraw His eternal covenant with him. Catholics readily grant that the ancient Jews were often (usually) corrupt and that they repeatedly fell into rebellion and wickedness. But it is not the case that they ever ceased to be the chosen people: a precursor of the Church.

For who can presume to deny the title of the Church to those with whom the Lord deposited the preaching of his word and the observance of his mysteries? (IV, 2:7)

We agree. St. Paul argued exactly this in Romans 9:4 and 11:1–5, 26–29.

On the other hand, who may presume to give the name of Church, without reservation, to that assembly by which the word of God is openly and with impunity trampled under foot—where his ministry, its chief support, and the very soul of the Church, is destroyed? (IV, 2:7)

This is asserted without being proven in the least. Calvin again is guilty of logically circular assertions.

Now then let the Papists, in order to extenuate their vices as much as possible, deny, if they can, that the state of religion is as much vitiated and corrupted with them as it was in the kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam. (IV, 2:9)

I'm happy to do so, without denying that there was plenty of corruption among *individual Catholics* in Calvin's period (as there was among individual Protestants). The *doctrine* did not become fundamentally corrupted, however, because that was under God's protection.

They have a grosser idolatry, and in doctrine are not one whit more pure; rather, perhaps, they are even still more impure. God, nay, even those possessed of a moderate degree of judgment, will bear me witness, and the thing itself is too manifest to require me to enlarge upon it. (IV, 2:9)

How convenient. Calvin in effect says, “my point of view is self-evident; therefore I don't have to devote any of my energies and considerable zeal to rationally defending it.”

When they would force us to the communion of their Church, ... (IV, 2:9)

It is not “their” (i.e., “our”) Church; it is *the* Church. Calvin's burden remains: he has to establish that his “church” is the one true Church, and that the Catholic Church is not. He scarcely even makes the attempt; he

simply asserts what he regards as self-evident truisms. That may be fine in some contexts (e.g., “preaching to the choir”), but it is not rationally compelling argument and has no value in judging the relative merits of competing truth claims.

For when the Church is considered in that particular point of view as the Church, whose judgment we are bound to revere, whose authority acknowledge, whose admonitions obey, whose censures dread, whose communion religiously cultivate in every respect, we cannot concede that they have a Church, without obliging ourselves to subjection and obedience. (IV, 2:10)

If the Catholic Church, headed by the popes in Rome, is *the* Church, then obedience is a matter of course, and not to be questioned. Since Calvin doesn’t *want* to be obedient to the historic Catholic Church, due to his doctrinal dissent, he seems to have a rhetorical, polemical need to define it out of existence, since he knows full well what the Bible teaches about Church authority. But his “case” for his schism inevitably falls short, because everywhere it runs into inexorable historical difficulties.

15. Boy-Bishops vs. Calvin and Boy-King Edward VI

But the most absurd thing of all is, that even boys scarcely ten years of age are, by the permission of the Pope, made bishops. Such is the effrontery and stupidity to which they have arrived, that they have no dread even of that last and monstrous iniquity, which is altogether abhorrent even from natural feeling. Hence it appears what kind of elections these must have been, when such supine negligence existed. (IV, 5:1)

Catholics agree that there was widespread corruption in personal conduct, in this age. But the solutions proposed by Protestants and faithful Catholics differ very widely. Since Calvin wishes to make boy bishops an issue, however, readers may be interested to know that Calvin dedicated his *Commentary on Isaiah*, in the year 1550 (on Christmas day), to King Edward VI of England, who was then all of 13 years old.

Not just the dedication itself, but the ludicrous flowery, flattering, fawning language in it, is enough to turn Calvin’s criticism back onto him,

full force, since he had written: “the most absurd thing of all is, that even boys scarcely ten years of age are, by the permission of the Pope, made bishops” and described this as “effrontery and stupidity.” It is relevant to examine, then, what Calvin expressed about a 13-year-old being the head of the “Church of England” (often compared by hopeful Protestants—including Calvin—to King Josiah of ancient Israel, who ascended to the throne at age eight):

[I]t may justly be regarded as no ordinary consolation amidst the present distresses of the Church, that God has raised you up and endowed you with such excellent abilities and dispositions for defending the cause of godliness, and that you so diligently render that obedience to God in this matter which you know that he accepts and approves. For although the affairs of the kingdom are hitherto conducted by your counsellors, and although your Majesty’s most illustrious uncle, the Duke of Sommerset, and many others, have religion so much at heart, that they labor diligently, as they ought to do, in establishing it; yet in your own exceptions you go so far beyond them all as to make it very manifest that they receive no small excitement from the zeal which they observe in you. Not only are you celebrated for possessing a noble disposition, and some seeds of virtues, (which at so early an age is usually thought to be remarkable,) but for a maturity of those virtues far beyond your years, which would be singularly admired, as well as praised, at a very advanced age. Your piety especially is so highly applauded, that the Prophet Isaiah, I am fully convinced, will have one that will regard him with as much reverence, now that he is dead, as Hezekiah did when he was alive....

And here I expressly call upon you, most excellent King, or rather, God himself addresses you by the mouth of his servant Isaiah, charging you to proceed, to the utmost of your ability and power, in carrying forward the restoration of the Church, which has been so successfully begun in your kingdom....

It is of high importance, most noble King, that you should be stimulated to activity by the consideration of the duty enjoined on you; for Isaiah exhorts all kings and magistrates, in the person of Cyrus, to stretch

forth their hand to the Church, when in distress, to restore her to her former condition. Yet there is this difference between your condition and that of Cyrus, that he who was a stranger to the Lord's flock never was expressly taught freely and willingly to come forward and undertake to be a defender of the Church; but to you, to whom the Lord has not only given adoption, but has likewise assigned a distinguished place among his sons, the Prophet may be said to stretch out his hand and call you to this office. So much the more boldly and resolutely ought you, noble King, to proceed in this course.

(translated by William Pringle, 1850)

Less than a month later, on 24 January 1551, Calvin also dedicated his *Commentary on the General Epistles* to the boy-king, with the following absurd sentiments:

And as interpreters of Scripture, according to their opportunity, are to supply weapons to fight against Antichrist, so also you must bear in mind that it is a duty which belongs to your Majesty, to vindicate from unworthy calumnies the true and genuine interpretation of Scripture, so that pure religion may flourish.... the heroic greatness of your mind far surpasses the measure of your age, ...

In like manner, when we maintain that their kingdom is the tyranny of Antichrist, they immediately object that their venerable hierarchy has often been extolled by great and holy men, as if the holy fathers, when they commended the ecclesiastical hierarchy or spiritual government handed down to them by the apostles, ever dreamed of that shapeless and dreary chaos where bishoprics are held for the most part by ignorant asses, who do not even know the first and ordinary rudiments of the faith, or occasionally by boys who have just left their nurse; (IV, 5:13)

Corruption doesn't disprove that a thing is what it is: that a Church ceases to be a Church. Calvin runs up against the biblical doctrine of indefectibility, in asserting such things. As for young boys running a diocese, Calvin (as we saw above) had no problem at all with a nine-year-old king (Edward VI) ascending to the throne of England and assuming the

headship of the “church” in that entire country. So when “abominations” like this serve his ends of so-called “reform” Calvin is all for it, while he mocks boy-bishops in the Catholic Church.

Catholics need not fall into *either* error. We oppose kings as head of the Church, in any way, shape, or form, no matter how young (or old) they are, and we think boy-bishops are a ridiculous state of affairs as well. But we don’t mock one thing as a corruption while praising an even *more* extreme instance of the same thing to the skies, and pretending that such a boy-king has a special charism of the Holy Spirit, quite like what Calvin would utterly condemn if a Catholic made a similar argument of popes being specially led by the Holy Spirit.

To top it off, Calvin contradicts himself again with his own words:

If in this matter we seek the authority of Christ, there can be no doubt that he intended to debar the ministers of his word from civil domination and worldly power when he said, “The princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you” (Mt. 20:25, 26). For he intimates not only that the office of pastor is distinct from the office of prince, but that the things differ so widely that they cannot be united in the same individual. Moses indeed held both (Exod. 18:16); but, first, this was the effect of a rare miracle; and, secondly, it was temporary, until matters should be better arranged. For when a certain form is prescribed by the Lord, the civil government is left to Moses, and he is ordered to resign the priesthood to his brother. And justly; for it is more than nature can do, for one man to bear both burdens. This has in all ages been carefully observed in the Church. Never did any bishop, so long as any true appearance of a church remained, think of usurping the right of the sword: so that, in the age of Ambrose, it was a common proverb, that emperors longed more for the priesthood than priests for imperial power. For the expression which he afterwards adds was fixed in all minds, Palaces belong to the emperor, churches to the priest. (IV, 11:8)

16. The Church and Capital Punishment for Heresy

Some, in imagining that all these things were temporary, as magistrates were still strangers to our profession of religion, are led astray, by not observing the distinction and dissimilarity between ecclesiastical and civil power. For the Church has not the right of the sword to punish or restrain, has no power to coerce, no prison nor other punishments which the magistrate is wont to inflict. (IV, 11:3)

Why, then, did Calvin sanction capital punishment for what he deemed as heresy? He wrote concerning Michael Servetus:

But I am unwilling to pledge my word for his safety, for if he shall come, I shall never permit him to depart alive, provided my authority be of any avail.

(Letter to Farel, 13 February 1546; in Henry Beveridge and Jules Bonnet, editors, David Constable, translator, *Selected Works of John Calvin: Tracts and Letters*: Volume 5: *Letters, Part 2: 1545–1553*; originally published in Philadelphia by Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1858; reprinted by Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1983, p. 33)

Calvin may abstractly separate Church and state in such unpleasant matters, but in practice, there was a close conjunction. Thus, he could write to the Protector (Duke) Somerset, Regent of England (my italics):

[T]here are two kinds of rebels who have risen up against the King and the Estates of the Kingdom. (1) The one, a fantastical sort of persons, who, under color of the Gospel, would put all into confusion. (2) The others are persons who persist in the superstitions of the Roman Antichrist. *Both alike deserve to be repressed by the sword which is committed to you*, since they not only attack the King, but strive with God, who has placed him upon a royal throne, and has committed to you the protection as well of his person as of his majesty.... The Papists, in endeavoring to maintain the corruptions and abominations of their Romish idol, shew themselves to be the open enemies of the grace of Jesus Christ, and of all his ordinances. That ought likewise to occasion great sickness at heart among all those who have a single drop of godly

zeal. And therefore they ought every one of them earnestly to consider, that *these are the rods of God for their correction.*

(Letter of 22 October 1548; in Henry Beveridge et al, *ibid.*, pp. 187–188)

Elsewhere, Calvin expressly contradicted what he wrote above (my italics again):

This passage has been most improperly abused by the Anabaptists, and by others like them, *to take from the Church the power of the sword.* But it is easy to refute them; for since they approve of excommunication, which cuts off, at least for a time, the bad and reprobate, *why may not godly magistrates, when necessity calls for it, use the sword against wicked men?*

(*Harmony of the Gospels*, Vol. II, translated by William Pringle, commentary on Matthew 13:39 [parable of the wheat and the tares], written in 1555)

Calvin expressed the following opinion about St. Thomas More's murder by King Henry VIII:

Do we need a more obvious example than this, of the judgments by which God punishes the pride of the impious, unbounded desire for glory, and blasphemous boastings?

(cited in William Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait*, Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 96)

Then the object in view is not to punish the sinner against his will, but to obtain a profession of penitence by voluntary chastisement. The two things, therefore, are widely different, because neither does the Church assume anything to herself which is proper to the magistrate, nor is the magistrate competent to what is done by the Church. This will be made clearer by an example. Does any one get intoxicated? In a well-ordered city his punishment will be imprisonment. Has he committed whoredom? The punishment will be similar, or rather more severe. Thus satisfaction will be given to the laws, the magistrates, and the external tribunal. But the consequence will be, that the offender will

give no signs of repentance, but will rather fret and murmur. Will the Church not here interfere? Such persons cannot be admitted to the Lord's Supper without doing injury to Christ and his sacred institution. Reason demands that he who, by a bad example, gives offence to the Church, shall remove the offence which he has caused by a formal declaration of repentance. The reason adduced by those who take a contrary view is frigid. Christ, they say, gave this office to the Church when there were no magistrates to execute it. But it often happens that the magistrate is negligent, nay, sometimes himself requires to be chastised; as was the case with the Emperor Theodosius. Moreover, the same thing may be said regarding the whole ministry of the word. Now, therefore, according to that view, let pastors cease to censure manifest iniquities, let them cease to chide, accuse, and rebuke. For there are Christian magistrates who ought to correct these things by the laws and the sword. (IV, 11:3)

If the Christian magistrate is acting as a Christian on behalf of the Church, it is a distinction without a difference. It is still the Church persecuting with the sword. It doesn't essentially change just because the person doing it is one step removed from the Church, as a member of the civil government. What's the difference?

In both instances a person is killed or persecuted by a Christian, with the approval of Calvin and his cohorts. It matters not if a Calvinist pastor does it, or a "Christian magistrate." Like Luther and Lutherans, Calvin and Calvinists are just as guilty of putting non-Calvinist Christians or other heretics to death, as Catholics (so often maligned for the Inquisition). These facts need to be known and taken into consideration, in the course of any fair inquiry and comparison.

But as the magistrate ought to purge the Church of offences by corporal punishment and coercion, so the minister ought, in his turn, to assist the magistrate in diminishing the number of offenders. Thus they ought to combine their efforts, the one being not an impediment but a help to the other. (IV, 11:3)

For when emperors and magistrates began to assume the Christian name, spiritual jurisdiction was not forthwith abolished, but was only

so arranged as not in any respect to impair civil jurisdiction, or be confounded with it. And justly. For the magistrate, if he is pious, will have no wish to exempt himself from the common subjection of the children of God, not the least part of which is to subject himself to the Church, judging according to the word of God; so far is it from being his duty to abolish that judgment. (IV, 11:4)

This proves my point: there is such a close conjunction that it is a distinction without a difference. Yet Calvinists today often seize on this abstraction to claim that Calvinists never persecuted (like the “evil” Catholics did); that *civil states* did so. That won’t wash.

In this respect Calvinism is not that different from Catholicism. We object to the double standard of Protestants pretending that they were not guilty of putting heretics to death, as Catholics were. This is a myth that continues to this day, for some odd reason. The actual historical record shows otherwise. The only Calvinist persecution many Calvinists know about at all is that of Michael Servetus (with which Calvin was directly, actively involved), and they think that was a single exception to a general rule of Calvin’s tolerance.

Mythical fictions like these keep the fires of hostility against Catholics stoked, and the double standards of discourse on competing truth claims in place.

First, the object in view is to prevent the occurrence of scandals, and when they arise, to remove them. In the use two things are to be considered: first, that this spiritual power be altogether distinct from the power of the sword; secondly, that it be not administered at the will of one individual, but by a lawful consistory (1 Cor. 5:4). (IV, 11:5)

Calvin had little or no objection to the tyrannies of Henry VIII. Would any sane person argue that he was not the prime figure (if not sole figure) in the murder of St. Thomas More and many other thousands, for that matter: mostly innocent Catholics who simply wished to practice their faith?

After all, he proclaimed himself supreme head of the Church of England. So he was a Super-Pope in his own domain. But one looks in vain in Calvin’s ample writings for any glimmer of protest against this. To the

contrary, Calvin fawned over the English “reformers” and sought a close relationship to them. He admired their (dirty) work.

For holy bishops did not exercise their power by fine, imprisonment, or other civil penalties, but as became them, employed the word of God only. For the severest punishment of the Church, and, as it were, her last thunderbolt, is excommunication, which is not used unless in necessity. This, moreover, requires neither violence nor physical force, but is contented with the might of the word of God. In short, the jurisdiction of the ancient Church was nothing else than (if I may so speak) a practical declaration of what Paul teaches concerning the spiritual power of pastors. “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; and having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience” (2 Cor. 10:4–6). As this is done by the preaching of doctrine, so in order that doctrine may not be held in derision, those who profess to be of the household of faith ought to be judged according to the doctrine which is taught. (IV, 11:5)

Would that Calvin and Luther had followed their example, instead of forbidding the mass, stealing hundreds of Catholic church buildings and monasteries, banishing Catholics, drowning Anabaptists, etc.

Calvin does, throughout the *Institutes*, hit upon many actual abuses of power and rightly condemns them. We do not disagree with the overall thrust of his objection in this regard; only with the constant insinuation that Catholics were uniquely guilty of such shortcomings, whereas Protestants supposedly were not. He tries to make polemical, sophistical hay out of general flaws and tendencies of men, and make them overwhelmingly apply to Catholics only. Needless to say, this is exceedingly unjust and unfair, and untrue to historical fact.

Chapter Two

II. Papal, Petrine, and Roman Primacy

1. Denial of the Primacy of St. Peter Among the Apostles

And yet, in truth, none can solve this question better than Scripture, if we compare all the passages in which it shows what office and power Peter held among the apostles, how he acted among them, how he was received by them (Acts 15:7). Run over all these passages, and the utmost you will find is, that Peter was one of twelve, their equal and colleague, not their master. (IV, 6:7)

I don't see that, and many do not. Peter didn't lord it over the others, because that was how a Christian leader was supposed to act, since Jesus taught that the greatest of all was the servant of all. But it doesn't follow from this that he didn't have the authority and leadership. Plenty in Scripture to establish that.

He indeed brings the matter before the council when anything is to be done, and advises as to what is necessary, but he, at the same time, listens to the others, not only conceding to them an opportunity of expressing their sentiments, but allowing them to decide; and when they have decided, he follows and obeys. When he writes to pastors, he does not command authoritatively as a superior, but makes them his colleagues, and courteously advises as equals are wont to do (1 Pet. 5:1). (IV, 6:7)

As popes have usually done also ... This proves nothing. Even Jesus called the disciples His "friends":

Luke 12:4 I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.

John 15:14–15 You are my friends if you do what I command you. [15] No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

Does it follow, then, that they were equals to Him, because of this courtesy? Calvin is grasping at straws.

Being ordered by his colleagues to go with John into Samaria, he declines not (Acts 8:14). The apostles, by sending him, declare that they by no means regard him as a superior, while he, by obeying and undertaking the embassy committed to him, confesses that he is associated with them, and has no authority over them. (IV, 6:7)

This is a respectable argument. But it fails when the scope of biblical language concerning being “sent” is examined:

John 20:21 Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.”

Note the word “even.” If Jesus’ sending of them is in the same category as the Father sending Jesus (cf. Mk 9:37; Lk 20:13; Jn 11:42; 17:8, 18; Rom 8:3), then by Calvin’s logic, if the disciples were inferior to Jesus *simply* because they were sent by Him (following the logic here), then Jesus would also be inferior to the Father, because He was sent by the Father. But this is not the case,

In Christian trinitarian theology, including Calvin’s own, the Father and the Son are equal in power, glory, and majesty. Jesus sends the Holy Spirit (Jn 15:26; 16:7); so does the Father (Jn 14:26). None of this implies any inequality; therefore, Peter being “sent” somewhere by others in the Church does not necessarily imply that he is inferior in authority. Likewise, the fact that Paul was sent out by the Thessalonian and Berean brethren, doesn’t prove that he was *not* “over” them in authority:

Acts 17:10 The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Beroe’a ...

Acts 17:14 Then the brethren immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea, but Silas and Timothy remained there.

These are not even fellow disciples; they are plain old “brethren.” We know that Paul had authority over the Thessalonian church, just as he did over other churches he was associated with. For example:

1 Thessalonians 1:6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, ...

1 Thessalonians 2:6–7, 11–13 nor did we seek glory from men, whether from you or from others, though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. [7] But we were gentle among you, like a nurse taking care of her children.... [11] for you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you [12] to lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. [13] And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

Yet Paul calls the Thessalonians “brethren” too. So Calvin’s argument regarding Peter being “sent” by the Church; therefore supposedly disproving his leadership, falls flat. It shows a weak understanding of the broad “both/and” latitude of Hebraic concepts and language and inability or unwillingness to properly compare Scripture with Scripture, and interpret it as a cohesive whole. Sadly, Calvin repeatedly exhibits this trait of isolating one Scripture and drawing out of it a certain meaning, while ignoring relevant similar Scriptures, throughout his *Institutes*.

But if none of these facts existed, the one Epistle to the Galatians would easily remove all doubt, there being almost two chapters in which the whole for which Paul contends is, that in regard to the honour of the apostleship, he is the equal of Peter (Gal. 1:18; 2:8). (IV, 6:7)

Neither of these passages proves anything of the sort. The first says he went to visit Peter. If anything that shows a preeminence of Peter. In the verse before, he says he didn’t even visit the other apostles. Then he says he went to visit Peter for fifteen days. All Galatians 2:8 says is that God

worked through both Peter and Paul, in missions to the Jews and Gentiles, respectively. That proves nothing as to relative rank or position.

In Galatians 2:9 Paul was commissioned by James, Peter, and John, implying that he was in subjection to them, not in an absolutely equal position, let alone superior position related to Peter or, for that matter, James and John. The same is evident at the council of Jerusalem.

Hence he states, that he went to Peter, not to acknowledge subjection, but only to make their agreement in doctrine manifest to all; that Peter himself asked no acknowledgment of the kind, but gave him the right hand of fellowship, that they might be common labourers in the vineyard; that not less grace was bestowed on him among the Gentiles than on Peter among the Jews: in fine, that Peter, when he was not acting with strict fidelity, was rebuked by him, and submitted to the rebuke (Gal. 2:11). All these things make it manifest, either that there was an equality between Paul and Peter, or, at least, that Peter had no more authority over the rest than they had over him. This point, as I have said, Paul handles professedly, in order that no one might give a preference over him, in respect of apostleship, to Peter or John, who were colleagues, not masters. (IV, 6:7)

A rebuke for hypocrisy has nothing to do with rank, either, let alone doctrinal authority. Jesus scathingly rebuked the Pharisees for their hypocrisy, yet *right before* doing this, He instructed His disciples that they had authority to teach:

Matthew 23:2–3 The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; [3] so practice and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do; for they preach, but do not practice.

I think the biblical evidence suggests things quite different from Calvin's conclusions, as shown.

But were I to concede to them what they ask with regard to Peter—viz. that he was the chief of the apostles, and surpassed the others in dignity—there is no ground for making a universal rule out of a special example, or wresting a single fact into a perpetual enactment, seeing that the two things are widely different. (IV, 6:8)

That doesn't follow. If there is something in the Bible that is clearly intended as a model, then it is indeed perpetual. Apostolic succession is observed in the Bible. That has to do with apostles and the bishops as their successors. It was the consensus viewpoint of the fathers as well. Therefore, if Peter is shown to be the leader of the apostles, and preeminent, then it is perfectly plausible and to be expected that that office would continue, just as the office of bishop was to continue.

On the other hand, it is silly to posit some form of ecclesiology in the Bible and conclude that it was only for the first generation of Christians, or the first century (apostolic era) or some other arbitrary length of time. What sense does *that* make? Any sort of organization has a structure of authority.

2. Was the Papacy Instituted by Jesus Christ?

The question, then, may be thus stated, Is it necessary for the true order of the hierarchy (as they term it), or of ecclesiastical order, that one See should surpass the others in dignity and power, so as to be the head of the whole body? We subject the Church to unjust laws if we lay this necessity upon her without sanction from the word of God. Therefore, if our opponents would prove what they maintain, it behoves them first of all to show that this economy was instituted by Christ. (IV, 6:2)

The Bible reveals again and again that Peter was the head of the apostles. He possessed the keys to the kingdom of heaven, and Jesus built His Church upon Peter (not just his "faith": an antiquated, polemical position that is overwhelmingly rejected by the best exegetes of all persuasions today). The papacy is modeled after that. We have plenty of biblical sanction for our ecclesiological position. Here are a few (of many) biblical indications for Petrine primacy:

Peter is specified by an angel as the leader and representative of the apostles (Mk 16:7).

Peter utters the first anathema (Ananias and Sapphira) emphatically affirmed by God (Acts 5:2–11)!

Peter is the first person after Christ to raise the dead (Acts 9:40).

Cornelius is told by an angel to seek out Peter for instruction in Christianity (Acts 10:1–6).

Peter is the first to receive the Gentiles, after a revelation from God (Acts 10:9–48).

Peter presides over and opens the first Council of Christianity, and lays down principles afterwards accepted by it (Acts 15:7–11).

Peter is the first to recognize and refute heresy, in Simon Magus (Acts 8:14–24).

Paul went to Jerusalem specifically to see Peter for fifteen days in the beginning of his ministry (Gal 1:18), and was commissioned by Peter, James and John (Gal 2:9) to preach to the Gentiles.

Peter acts, by strong implication, as the chief bishop/shepherd of the Church (1 Pet 5:1), since he exhorts all the other bishops, or “elders.”

The strength of the biblical argument concerning Peter and the papacy is not compelling due to any one proof-text, but as a result of many taken together, like strands in a rope, that become very strong when wrapped together. Calvin seems to not even be *aware* of most of them.

The discipline of the Church, the consideration of which has been deferred till now, must be briefly explained, that we may be able to pass to other matters. Now discipline depends in a very great measure on the power of the keys and on spiritual jurisdiction. (IV, 12:1)

And let us note once again that the “keys” were only given to *St. Peter* in Scripture (Matthew 16:19): a fact that Calvin continually glosses over. He also ignores the Old Testament background of this phraseology: a thing that has been amply dealt with by modern Protestant Bible scholars; it in turn indicates strong “papal” aspects.

3. Is Peter the “Rock” on Whom Christ Built His Church?

Though we are not yet come to that part of the discussion, I would merely observe at present, how futilely those argue who, out of the mere

name of Peter, would rear up a governing power over the whole Church. For the ancient quibble which they at first used to give a colour—viz. The Church is founded upon Peter, because it is said, “On this rock,” &c.—is undeserving of notice, not to say of refutation. Some of the Fathers so expounded!_ But when the whole of Scripture is repugnant to the exposition, why is their authority brought forward in opposition to God? nay, why do we contend about the meaning of these words, as if it were obscure or ambiguous, when nothing can be more clear and certain? Peter had confessed in his own name, and that of his brethren, that Christ was the Son of God (Mt. 16:16). On this rock Christ builds his Church, because it is the only foundation; as Paul says, “Other foundation than this can no man lay” (1 Cor. 3:11). Therefore, I do not here repudiate the authority of the Fathers, because I am destitute of passages from them to prove what I say, were I disposed to quote them; but as I have observed, I am unwilling to annoy my readers by debating so clear a matter, especially since the subject has long ago been fully handled and expounded by our writers. (IV, 6:6)

This has been the standard Protestant polemical response, through the centuries: the Church was built on Peter’s confession of *faith*, not he *himself*; and since any Christian can make such a profession, the Church is built equally on all of us (i.e., in the sense that would exclude a pope), and thus, this traditional proof for the papacy is supposedly refuted. Calvin (like so many Protestants, in their methodology) proclaims that the Scripture in this instance is crystal-clear; case closed!

The only problem is that the vast majority of the best Protestant exegetes in recent times (e.g., R. T. France, D. A. Carson, D. W. O’Connor, William F. Albright, William Hendriksen, Gerhard Maier, Craig L. Blomberg, Herman Ridderbos, David Hill) do not *agree* with this, and agree that the rock is indeed *Peter*. Calvin does not represent the pinnacle and summit of Protestant exegesis for all time, by any stretch of the imagination.

4. Jesus Tells Peter to “Feed My Lambs” (John 21:15)

Again, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?” “Feed my lambs” (John 21:15). But to give strength to these proofs, they must, in the first place, show, that to him who is ordered to feed the flock of Christ power is given over all churches, and that to bind and loose is nothing else than to preside over the whole world. (IV, 6:3)

It is not necessary for all the aspects of an office to be proven in any one proof-text. The Catholic argument (like the biblical argument for the Trinity and many other positions) is, again, a cumulative one: deduced from many different proofs of different sorts. Having, for example, the “keys of the kingdom” (which is only said of Peter and no one else) means, once the background is understood, that the one possessing these keys is a sort of superintendent or supervisor of the Church. The Church is in turn, universal. That is but one proof of several.

St. Peter’s epistles have a universal character to them: sort of like papal encyclicals. Peter is clearly regarded as the leader of the early Church, as seen in the book of Acts. He is the Rock that the Church was built upon. The clues for his primacy are all over the place in Scripture. It’s as if Calvin can’t see the sun (the papacy) at high noon on a clear summer day, when he looks all around the “sky” of Scripture.

But as Peter had received a command from the Lord, so he exhorts all other presbyters to feed the Church (1 Pet. 5:2). (IV, 6:3)

Of course, the pope exhorts bishops. It doesn’t follow that there is no pope. The very fact that he is exhorting all the others suggests preeminence. This is how his epistles read. They have a general character because they are directly intended for the whole Church, not just one local congregation, or one person, as in St. Paul’s letters.

Hence we are entitled to infer, that, by that expression of Christ, nothing more was given to Peter than to the others, or that the right which Peter had received he communicated equally to others. (IV, 6:3)

That can’t be sustained from the data, because there is too much prominence given to Peter. He alone has the keys. He alone was the “Rock”. The others were given the power to bind and loose, because that is a power

that all priests possess (to absolve sins and impose temporal penalties for sin).

But even here, Calvin neglects to see that Peter was given the power *individually by name*, whereas the others receive it collectively. This also shows preeminence, not equality, precisely because he was singled out. The biblical data (taken all together) does not allow an interpretation of Peter being not a whit different from all the other apostles.

5. Analogy of Ancient Israel and the Jewish High Priest

For this purpose, they refer to the office of high priest under the law, and the supreme jurisdiction which God appointed at Jerusalem. But the solution is easy, and it is manifold if one does not satisfy them. First, no reason obliges us to extend what was useful in one nation to the whole world; nay, the cases of one nation and of the whole world are widely different. (IV, 6:2)

Calvin often makes analogies from ancient Israel to the present Church. Yet when Catholics do so, all of a sudden it is improper, simply because we draw conclusions he *disagrees* with? He may disagree with our explanations for the papacy, but it is far different to go after the *mode of argument* that we use (in this case, analogy to ancient Israel). He is applying two standards, based on what he agrees and disagrees with. That won't do, and he needs to be called on it.

Because the Jews were hemmed in on every side by idolaters, God fixed the seat of his worship in the central region of the earth, that they might not be distracted by a variety of religions; there he appointed one priest to whom they might all look up, that they might be the better kept in unity. But now when the true religion has been diffused over the whole globe, who sees not that it is altogether absurd to give the government of East and West to one individual? It is just as if one were to contend that the whole world ought to be governed by one prefect, because one district has not several prefects. (IV, 6:2)

The Church is in no less need of unity because it is more universal. That is fallacious logic. If anything, the need for unity by virtue of a central figure, would be even *more* necessary, the larger an entity becomes. But there are still bishops, who have a local jurisdiction. It's not "either/or." Calvin has neither bishops nor a pope, so I fail to see how that is a superior state of affairs.

Hence, we see the absurd sectarianism and denominationalism that has flourished ever since in Protestantism. Orthodoxy has not fragmented to nearly that extent in its rejection of the papacy, because it retains Holy Tradition, the sacraments, and bishops. But when Protestantism mostly rejected all these things, the way was opened for rampant chaos and doctrinal relativism. And indeed that has come to pass.

But there is still another reason why that institution ought not to be drawn into a precedent. Every one knows that the high priest was a type of Christ; now, the priesthood being transferred, that right must also be transferred. To whom, then, was it transferred? certainly not to the Pope, as he dares impudently to boast when he arrogates this title to himself, but to Christ, who, as he alone holds the office without vicar or successor, does not resign the honour to any other. For this priesthood consists not in doctrine only, but in the propitiation which Christ made by his death, and the intercession which he now makes with the Father (Heb. 7:11). (IV, 6:2)

But this misses the whole point. God is always the Head and reigns supreme. That was true under the old covenant and it is in the new covenant. That never changes. Why have human figureheads in the old covenant and then suddenly we have no need of same in the new? God was the King then, and had high priests and patriarchs and prophets, and he made covenants with folks like Noah and David, and gave the Law to men like Moses. He is the king now and has bishops and popes.

Why should there be any radical change? Men are involved in both covenants. It doesn't go from "concrete leadership" to "no leadership of men because this clashes with God." The common sense law of analogy shows that.

This is why we see all sorts of indications of human leadership in the New Testament. Why would Jesus, for example, bother to say that He was

building His Church upon *Peter* (of *all* people to choose: a vacillating, impulsive weak reed!)?

If Jesus alone were the head of the Church, in the sense that no created human being is also a head, in human, jurisdictional, administrative (etc.) terms, then it seems clear that He would not have said that. He would have simply said that He was building His Church, and would have left Peter or any other man out of it. Would that not follow if Calvin were correct? Rejection of Petrine primacy and leadership makes no sense at all, from a biblical perspective.

That example, therefore, which is seen to have been temporary, they have no right to bind upon us as by a perpetual law. In the New Testament there is nothing which they can produce in confirmation of their opinion, but its having been said to one, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church” (Mt. 16:18). (IV, 6:3)

This is simply untrue. Calvin greatly underestimates the power of the Catholic argument. He consistently does this.

6. Peter's Primacy and Papal Succession Through History

One was chief among the apostles, just because they were few in number. If one man presided over twelve, will it follow that one ought to preside over a hundred thousand? (IV, 6:8)

It does if said person is indicated in many ways in the Bible as having a sublime authority, and it follows in the sense of models and their successors later in history. It follows since Jesus built His Church on Peter himself (not just his faith). One could just as easily flip Calvin's argument and argue that if twelve need a leader, how much *more* would a hundred thousand also?

All human groups have need of that. Groups also have leaders who are heads in the sense that they have more power and authority than anyone else. The President of the United States is such a person. He has the power of veto and proclamation, to influence millions of people more than others are able to, because of the prominence of his position.

That twelve had one among them to direct all is nothing strange. Nature admits, the human mind requires, that in every meeting, though all are equal in power, there should be one as a kind of moderator to whom the others should look up. There is no senate without a consul, no bench of judges without a president or chancellor, no college without a provost, no company without a master. Thus there would be no absurdity were we to confess that the apostles had conferred such a primacy on Peter. But an arrangement which is effectual among a few must not be forthwith transferred to the whole world, which no one man is able to govern. (IV, 6:8)

This isn't logical. Why is it implausible to Calvin that the Church would have one worldwide leader? Obviously the one man can't do everything (like Moses in the Old Testament getting the advice from his father-in-law Jethro to divide his responsibilities lest he become exhausted). But he has the aid of bishops overseeing local areas. The Catholic Church follows that model. One man is still needed for unity's sake. Nothing shows that more than the history and current disunity of Protestantism.

But (say they) it is observed that not less in nature as a whole, than in each of its parts, there is one supreme head. Proof of this it pleases them to derive from cranes and bees, which always place themselves under the guidance of one, not of several. I admit the examples which they produce; but do bees flock together from all parts of the world to choose one queen? Each queen is contented with her own hive. So among cranes, each flock has its own king. What can they prove from this, except that each church ought to have its bishop? (IV, 6:8)

The conclusive prooftexts of the papacy come from the Bible, not analogies to cranes and bees. In the end, we must go by the Bible, but not it alone; rather, the Bible as it has been interpreted by the fathers, and passed-down apostolic tradition.

7. The Papacy in St. Paul's Teaching and Thinking

Paul sometimes depicts a living image of the Church, but makes no mention of a single head. On the contrary, we may infer from his description, that it is foreign to the institution of Christ. (IV, 6:10)

It appears that he does not explicitly discuss it, but he does implicitly, or by deduction and implication. For example, we see his response regarding the Jewish high priest:

Acts 23:4–5 [4] Those who stood by said, “Would you revile God’s high priest?” [5] And Paul said, “I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, ‘You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.’”

Thus, Paul retains the notion of a leader. Presumably, then, he would agree that there was also a Christian leader within the ranks of the Church. We also see how he acted in deference to Peter, in consulting with him alone when he began his apostolate, and how he singles Peter out by name, from the other apostles:

1 Corinthians 9:5 Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a wife, as the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?

1 Corinthians 15:5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

Galatians 1:18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and remained with him fifteen days.

Even Paul’s rebuke of Peter contains strong indications that he was the leader, because when there is a problem, it is good to nip it in the bud by going right to the top of the chain of command. Peter wasn’t the *only* one who acted insincerely and hypocritically:

Galatians 2:13 And with him the rest of the Jews acted insincerely, so that even Barnabas was carried away by their insincerity.

Yet when Paul rebuked the behavior, he went straight to Peter (Gal 2:11, 14). This proves that Peter was the leader. He was expected to set a better example. The rebuke itself doesn’t disprove that he was a leader; it only proves that he was a hypocrite in that instance, like we all are at times.

Christ, by his ascension, took away his visible presence from us, and yet he ascended that he might fill all things: now, therefore, he is present in the Church, and always will be. When Paul would show the mode in which he exhibits himself, he calls our attention to the ministerial

offices which he employs: “Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ;” “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.” Why does he not say, that one presided over all to act as his substitute? (IV, 6:10)

I don’t know. But I know that the things I mentioned above are also relevant as to Paul’s opinion. And I know that many doctrines are in a relatively primitive state of development in the New Testament (even the Trinity itself: where its various aspects that were dogmatically adopted by the Church in the first seven centuries, are far more developed later on).

I also know that the same sort of argument about not mentioning certain things and concluding that, therefore, they play no role, can be turned back on Calvin. For example, in the very passage Calvin cites, about Church offices (Ephesians 4:11–15), another thing isn’t mentioned, either, that Calvin thinks *does* reign supreme, in terms of the rule of faith: Holy Scripture.

In other words, if there is no pope as authority because he isn’t mentioned in this passage, there also is no Scripture as the only final infallible authority, because it isn’t mentioned here. The authority in this passage, resides in the Church alone. Calvin’s argument proves too much. The fact remains that the Bible doesn’t always mention everything that can be mentioned, in every passage. Systematic theology must draw from the entire body of Holy Scripture. And this is what Catholics do when we see many biblical evidences for the papacy.

The passage particularly required this, and it ought not on any account to have been omitted if it had been true. (IV, 6:10)

Then Scripture can’t be the ultimate authority, either, since it, too, isn’t mentioned in the same wide-ranging passage. If Calvin doesn’t want that conclusion (that follows from his own internal logic), then he should also discard the argument about silence here disproving the existence of a papacy.

Christ, he says, is present with us. How? By the ministry of men whom he appointed over the government of the Church. Why not rather by a ministerial head whom he appointed his substitute? He speaks of unity,

but it is in God and in the faith of Christ. He attributes nothing to men but a common ministry, and a special mode to each. Why, when thus commending unity, does he not, after saying, “one body, one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Eph. 4:4), immediately add, one Supreme Pontiff to keep the Church in unity? (IV, 6:10)

Probably because he didn’t *have* to, since Matthew 16:19 was in everyone’s Bible, and it was crystal clear and understood by all. Peter was the rock. Paul calls Peter *Cephas* because that was the Aramaic word for “Rock.” Every time he uses that name, he is recalling the commission of Jesus in Matthew 16:19.

Nothing could have been said more aptly if the case had really been so. Let that passage be diligently pondered, and there will be no doubt that Paul there meant to give a complete representation of that sacred and ecclesiastical government to which posterity have given the name of hierarchy. (IV, 6:10)

The fact that Scripture was not mentioned shows that Paul was not giving an *absolutely* complete picture of Christian authority.

8. St. Peter’s and St. Paul’s Martyrdoms in Rome

I will now make them another concession, which they will never obtain from men of sound mind—viz. that the primacy of the Church was fixed in Peter, with the view of remaining for ever by perpetual succession. Still how will they prove that his See was so fixed at Rome, that whosoever becomes Bishop of that city is to preside over the whole world? By what authority do they annex this dignity to a particular place, when it was given without any mention of place? (IV, 6:11)

The authority is God’s providence going right to the heart of the Roman Empire and “Christianizing” it, starting with St. Peter and St. Paul being martyred there. For the world to be evangelized, Rome had to be converted first. That’s why, we believe, the two great apostles ended their lives there. It is surprising that Calvin sees no significance, in providence, in this fact

of the two most prominent Christian apostles, dying in the same place, in Europe, in the seat of the Roman Empire.

Peter, they say, lived and died at Rome. What did Christ himself do? Did he not discharge his episcopate while he lived, and complete the office of the priesthood by dying at Jerusalem? The Prince of pastors, the chief Shepherd, the Head of the Church, could not procure honour for a place, and Peter, so far his inferior, could! (IV, 6:11)

Jesus' mission was to the Jews first. The apostles were to spread it to the Gentiles. That easily accounts for the difference.

Is not this worse than childish trifling? Christ conferred the honour of primacy on Peter. Peter had his See at Rome, therefore he fixed the seat of the primacy there. In this way the Israelites of old must have placed the seat of the primacy in the wilderness, where Moses, the chief teacher and prince of prophets, discharged his ministry and died. (IV, 6:11)

No, because Moses was to take the Hebrews to the Promised Land. He didn't get there, due to his disobedience, but that was the destination. Once there, the center of religious activity and administration was to be Jerusalem. That was the old covenant. Once the new covenant and the gospel arrived, it was to spread to the Gentiles. Therefore, to best do that, the Church had to be centered in Gentile territories, and Rome: where the empire was based, and where persecution was the greatest, was the obvious choice.

This is not a "biblical" argument, but it is an argument from plausibility and common sense, regarding God's plan in evangelizing Europe: which would be (institutionally speaking) the center of Christianity henceforth.

9. Roman Primacy: Merely Historical Happenstance?

At that time, as has already been said, the Bishop of Constantinople was disputing with the Bishop of Rome for the primacy. For after the seat of empire was fixed at Constantinople, the majesty of the empire seemed to demand that that church should have the next place of honour to

that of Rome. And certainly, at the outset, nothing had tended more to give the primacy to Rome, than that it was then the capital of the empire. (IV, 7:14)

This is a typical Protestant argument (perhaps begun by Calvin): Rome was only primary by historical happenstance and connection to civil power. Catholics reply that it possessed the primacy over the universal Church because Jesus Christ granted that to St. Peter, who was martyred in Rome (and that St. Paul was martyred there as well). This was all part of God's providence: the opposite of mere happenstance or coincidence.

10. The Church Fathers and the Pope as “Head”

The name of *head* was not more approved. (IV, 7:21)

The facts show otherwise (my italics):

You are the *head* of the fountain from which My teaching flows, you are the chief of My disciples. Through you I will give drink to all peoples ... I have chosen you to be, as it were, the first-born in My institution, and so that, as the heir, you may be executor of my treasures. I have given you the keys of my kingdom. Behold, I have given you authority over all my treasures!

(St. Ephraem, Homilies, 4, 1)

Kephas ... the *head* of the Apostles who received the power of the keys and is taken for the shepherd of the flock ...

(St. Ephraem, *Against Heresies*, Sermo 56)

Peter, who is the *head* of the apostles ... he is the firm and most solid rock, on which the savior built his Church.

(St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Panegyric on St. Stephen*, 3)

Your grace must be besought not to permit any disturbance of the Roman Church, the *head* of the whole Roman World and of the most holy faith of the Apostles, for from thence flow out to all (churches) the bonds of sacred communion.

(St. Ambrose, Letter to Emperor Gratian, Epistle 11:4)

Peter, that the *head* of the Apostles, the first in the Church, the friend of Christ, who received the revelation not from man but from the Father ... this Peter, and when I say Peter, I mean the unbroken rock, the unshaken foundation, the great apostle, the first of the disciples, the first called, the first to obey.

(St. John Chrysostom, *Almsgiving* 3:4)

[Y]et one among the twelve is chosen so that when a *head* has been appointed, there may be no occasion for schism.

(St. Jerome, *Against Jovinianus*, Book I, 26; NPNF 2, Vol. VI)

11. Questionable Use of St. Cyprian Contra the Papacy

Cyprian, also, following Paul, derives the fountain of ecclesiastical concord from the one bishopric of Christ, and afterwards adds, "There is one Church, which by increase from fecundity is more widely extended to a multitude, just as there are many rays of the sun, but one light, and many branches of a tree, but one trunk upheld by the tenacious root. When many streams flow from one fountain, though there seems wide spreading numerosity from the overflowing copiousness of the supply, yet unity remains in the origin. Pluck a ray from the body of the sun, and the unity sustains no division. Break a branch from a tree, and the branch will not germinate. Cut off a stream from a fountain, that which is thus cut off dries up. So the Church, pervaded by the light of the Lord, extends over the whole globe, and yet the light which is everywhere diffused is one" (Cyprian, *de Simpliciter. Prælat.*). (IV, 2:6)

We see how he constantly calls us back to the head. Accordingly, he declares that when heresies and schisms arise, it is because men return not to the origin of the truth, because they seek not the head, because they keep not the doctrine of the heavenly Master. (IV, 2:6)

Calvin wants to co-opt St. Cyprian for his own ends of claiming that the Church can be defined in a way that excludes the Catholic Church headed by the pope of Rome, as its very center and foundation. This is a rather weak argument, once we consult other statements from the same father:

The Lord speaks to Peter, saying, “I say unto thee, that thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” And again to the same He says, after His resurrection, “Feed my sheep.” And although to all the apostles, after His resurrection, He gives an equal power, and says, “As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you: Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they shall be remitted unto him; and whose soever sins ye retain, they shall be retained;” yet, that He might set forth unity, He arranged by His authority the origin of that unity, as beginning from one. Assuredly the rest of the apostles were also the same as was Peter, endowed with a like partnership both of honour and power; but the beginning proceeds from unity.

(*The Unity of the Church* [Treatise IV]; ANF, Vol. V)

Nevertheless, Peter, upon whom by the same Lord the Church had been built, speaking one for all, and answering with the voice of the Church, says, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe, and are sure that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God:” signifying, doubtless, and showing that those who departed from Christ perished by their own fault, yet that the Church which believes on Christ, and holds that which it has once learned, never departs from Him at all, and that those are the Church who remain in the house of God; ... After such things as these, moreover, they still dare—a false bishop having been appointed for them by heretics—to set sail and to bear letters from schismatic and profane persons to the throne of Peter, and to the chief church whence priestly unity takes its source; and not to consider that these were the Romans whose faith was praised

in the preaching of the apostle, to whom faithlessness could have no access.

(Epistle LIV [LIX], To Cornelius, Concerning Fortunatus and Felicissimus, 7, 14; ANF, Vol. V)

They who have not peace themselves now offer peace to others. They who have withdrawn from the Church promise to lead back and to recall the lapsed to the Church. There is one God and one Christ, and one Church, and one Chair founded on Peter by the word of the Lord. It is not possible to set up another altar or for there to be another priesthood besides that one altar and that one priesthood. Whoever has gathered elsewhere is scattering.

(Letter 43 [40], To All His People, 5; in Jurgens, William A., editor and translator, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, volume I [of 3], Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1970, 229)

There speaks Peter, upon whom the Church would be built, teaching in the name of the Church and showing that even if a stubborn and proud multitude withdraws because it does not wish to obey, yet the Church does not withdraw from Christ. The people joined to the priest and the flock clinging to their shepherd are the Church. You ought to know, then, that the bishop is in the Church and the Church in the bishop, and if someone is not with the bishop, he is not in the Church. They vainly flatter themselves who creep up, not having peace with the priests of God, believing that they are secretly in communion with certain individuals. For the Church, which is One and Catholic, is not split nor divided, but is indeed united and joined by the cement of priests who adhere one to another.”

(Letter 66 [69], 8; To Florentius Pupianus; in Jurgens, *ibid.*, vol. I, 233–234)

St. Cyprian believed that Rome and the pope were the final arbiters of orthodoxy in the Church. That is Catholic authority: the very thing that Calvin thinks the Church can do without. Calvin contends that Cyprian appealed only to Christ and not also to St. Peter and his successors, the popes. Thus, he wrongly cites St. Cyprian on behalf of false views of

ecclesiology that the saint would never have sanctioned. This is what is called “anachronistic [or highly selective and partial] citation of the Church fathers.”

12. Did St. Jerome Deny Papal and Roman Supremacy?

Jerome, seeing he was a Roman presbyter, was not slow to proclaim the dignity of his church, in as far as fact and the circumstances of the times permitted, and yet we see how he brings it under due subordination. “If authority is asked, the world is greater than a city. Why produce to me the custom of one city? Why vindicate a small number with whom superciliousness has originated against the laws of the Church? Wherever the bishop be, whether at Rome, or Eugubium, or Constantinople, or Rhegium, the merit is the same, and the priesthood the same. The power of riches, or the humbleness of poverty, do not make a bishop superior or inferior” (Hieron. Ep. ad Evagr.). (IV, 7:3)

Be that as it may, Jerome also wrote to Pope Damasus (Letter XV), around 377:

Evil children have squandered their patrimony; you alone keep your heritage intact. The fruitful soil of Rome, when it receives the pure seed of the Lord, bears fruit an hundredfold; but here the seed corn is choked in the furrows and nothing grows but darnel or oats.... This is the house where alone the paschal lamb can be rightly eaten. This is the ark of Noah, and he who is not found in it shall perish when the flood prevails.... He that gathers not with you scatters; he that is not of Christ is of Antichrist ...

If you think fit enact a decree; and then I shall not hesitate to speak of three hypostases. Order a new creed to supersede the Nicene; and then, whether we are Arians or orthodox, one confession will do for us all....

I implore your blessedness, therefore, by the crucified Saviour of the world, and by the consubstantial trinity, to authorize me by letter either to use or to refuse this formula of three hypostases.

And again in Letter XVI (377 or 378) to the same pope, Jerome exclaims:

The untiring foe follows me closely, and the assaults that I suffer in the desert are severer than ever. For the Arian frenzy raves, and the powers of the world support it. The church is rent into three factions, and each of these is eager to seize me for its own. The influence of the monks is of long standing, and it is directed against me. I meantime keep crying: "He who clings to the chair of Peter is accepted by me." Meletius, Vitalis, and Paulinus all profess to cleave to you, and I could believe the assertion if it were made by one of them only. As it is, either two of them or else all three are guilty of falsehood. Therefore I implore your blessedness, by our Lord's cross and passion, those necessary glories of our faith, as you hold an apostolic office, to give an apostolic decision.

Calvin would have us believe that St. Jerome denied papal primacy and headship, even though he is ready (quite strikingly) to wholeheartedly accept a *unilateral declaration of theological doctrine* from the pope.

13. Constantinople, Apostolicity, and Pope Leo the Great

Agreeably to this ancient custom, the first Council of Constantinople decreed that the bishop of that city should take precedence after the Roman Pontiff, because it was a new Rome. But long after, when a similar decree was made at Chalcedon, Leo keenly protested (Socrat. Hist. Trop. Lib. 9 cap. 13). (IV, 7:15)

He did so because Constantinople was not an *apostolic* see (like, for example, Antioch was). It was built by the Emperor Constantine, from 324 to 330. Calvin is impressed by its claims because he always wants to tie church power with civil power (just as he did in his own Geneva). Thus, he thinks Rome is merely self-interested in opposing the rise of Constantinople in ecclesiastical hierarchy. But Rome was, as always, following apostolic precedent, the biblical Petrine data, and the history of the Church back to the apostles: rather than being dazzled by imperial riches and power.

And not only did he permit himself to set at nought what six hundred bishops or more had decreed, ... (IV, 7:15)

He only “vetoed” some of it (not much at all), because it was the jurisdiction of the popes to nullify conciliar decrees.

[H]e even assailed them with bitter reproaches, because they had derogated from other sees in the honour which they had presumed to confer on the Church of Constantinople (in Decr. 22, Distinct. cap. Constantinop.). What, pray, could have incited the man to trouble the world for so small an affair but mere ambition? (IV, 7:15)

Historical precedent and apostolic tradition were the “culprits.” It is odd that Calvin blithely assumes that it could only have been self-interest and “ambition” that would have motivated Pope St. Leo the Great.

But we know that policy varies with times, nay, demands various changes. It is therefore futile in Leo to pretend that the See of Constantinople ought not to receive the honour which was given to that of Alexandria, by the authority of the Council of Nice. (IV, 7:15)

Practical policies can change, but the status of Rome as the preeminent apostolic see does not change with the whim and fancy of the times. That was Leo’s point. He gave Constantinople a measure of honor, but pointed out the patently obvious fact that it was not apostolic, and thus not in any way the equal of Rome.

14. Was Pope Gregory the Great’s Reign (590–604) a Sea-Change?

In the time of Gregory, that ancient rule was greatly changed. For when the empire was convulsed and torn, when France and Spain were suffering from the many disasters which they ever and anon received, when Illyricum was laid waste, Italy harassed, and Africa almost destroyed by uninterrupted calamities, in order that, during these civil convulsions, the integrity of the faith might remain, or at least not entirely perish, the bishops in all quarters attached themselves more to the Roman Pontiff. In this way, not only the dignity, but also the power

of the see, exceedingly increased, although I attach no great importance to the means by which this was accomplished. It is certain, that it was then greater than in former ages. (IV, 7:12)

That had already been the pattern for almost 600 years. Nothing had changed. But opponents of the papacy habitually overlook scores of confirming evidences for this and claim historical happenstance and coincidence as the cause of papal supremacy. The incoherence of the anti-papal case is seen in the contradictory claims made by various Protestants: the papacy supposedly began in 313 with Constantine and legalization of Christianity in the Roman Empire, or with Leo the Great in the mid-5th century, or Gregory the Great in the late 6th century, etc.

It's all arbitrary. In fact it was a steady, continuous development from the beginning; grounded in the clear Petrine primacy expressed in Holy Scripture. In Calvin's take, the time of Gregory saw an increase by leaps and bounds. Others would place this phenomenon in Leo's reign, some 140 years before.

Ironically, Calvin's "power" to dogmatically declare his own anti-traditional Calvinist doctrines and dogmas (as in the very book here under consideration) was certainly far greater than any pope's power ever. At least popes are constrained by the received traditions. They have neither power nor jurisdiction to change apostolic doctrine, passed down faithfully for centuries.

Calvin, on the other hand, can ditch and dispense of apostolic traditions in one day, with the stroke of a pen. This renders rather ironic his critiques of papal authority. The same criticism applies to Luther, Zwingli, and Henry VIII, as well as the leaders of the Anabaptists, who were far more radical and anti-traditional than these men.

And yet it was very different from the unbridled dominion of one ruling others as he pleased. Still the reverence paid to the Roman See was such, that by its authority it could guide and repress those whom their own colleagues were unable to keep to their duty; for Gregory is careful ever and anon to testify that he was not less faithful in preserving the rights of others, that in insisting that his own should be preserved. "I do not," says he, "under the stimulus of ambition, derogate from any man's right, but desire to honour my brethren in all things" (Gregor. Lib. 2 Ep. 68).

There is no sentence in his writings in which he boasts more proudly of the extent of his primacy than the following: "I know not what bishop is not subject to the Roman See, when he is discovered in a fault" (Leo. Lib. 2, Epist. 68). However, he immediately adds, "Where faults do not call for interference, all are equal according to the rule of humility." He claims for himself the right of correcting those who have sinned; if all do their duty, he puts himself on a footing of equality. (IV, 7:12)

If there is no need for papal intervention, then, practically speaking, they are fellow bishops. This is common sense. But it doesn't override the essential hierarchical structure of the system, with the pope on top. Gregory the Great, at any rate, asserted more for papal authority than Calvin would have it:

Inasmuch as it is manifest that the Apostolic See, is, by the ordering of God, set over all Churches, there is, among our manifold cares, especial demand for our attention ...

(Letter to Subdeacon John; Register of the Epistles, Book III, Epistle 30; NPNF 2, Vol. XII)

Yet I exhort thee that, as long as some time of life remains for thee, thy soul may not be found to be divided from the church of the same blessed Peter, to whom the keys of the heavenly kingdom were entrusted and the power of binding and loosing was granted, lest if his benefit be despised down here, he may close up the entrance to life up there.

(*The Great Epistles*, B IV, Ep. 41), in J. P. Migne, *Patr. Lat.*, translated by John Collorafi)

To all who know the Gospel it is obvious that by the voice of the Lord the care of the entire church was committed to the holy apostle and prince of all the apostles, Peter ... Behold, he received the keys of the kingdom of heaven, the power to bind and loose was given to him, and the care and principality of the entire church was committed to him ... Am I defending my own cause in this matter? Am I vindicating some special injury of my own? Is it not rather the cause of Almighty God, the cause of the universal church?... And we certainly know that many priests of the church of Constantinople have fallen into the whirlpool of

heresy and have become not only heretics but heresiarchs ... Certainly, in honor of Peter, the prince of the apostles, 'the title 'universal'] was offered to the Roman pontiff by the venerable Council of Chalcedon.

(Epistle 37 to Emperor Maurice, Book V; from *Monumenta Germaniae historica: Epistolae*; Berlin: 1891–, Vol. I, 321–322; cited in Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100–600)*, University of Chicago Press, 1971, 352)

[T]he prelates of this apostolic see, which by the providence of God I serve, had the honor offered to them of being called 'universal' by the venerable Council of Chalcedon."

(Book V, Epistle 44; from *Monumenta Germaniae historica: Epistolae*; Berlin: 1891–, Vol. I, 341; cited in Pelikan, *ibid.*, 354)

[W]ho would doubt that it [the church of Constantinople] has been made subject to the apostolic see ...

(Book IX, Epistle 26; from *Monumenta Germaniae historica: Epistolae*; Berlin: 1891–, Vol. II, 60; cited in Pelikan, *ibid.*, 354)

[W]ithout the authority and the consent of the apostolic see, none of the matters transacted [by a council] have any binding force.

(Book IX, Epistle 156; from *Monumenta Germaniae historica: Epistolae*; Berlin: 1891–, Vol. II, 158; cited in Pelikan, *ibid.*, 354)

Who could be ignorant of the fact that the holy church is consolidated in the solidity of the prince of the Apostles, whose firmness of character extended to his name so that he should be called Peter after the 'rock,' when the voice of the Truth says, 'I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.' To him again is said "When after a little while thou hast come back to me, it is for thee to be the support of thy brethren.

(Epistle 40; in Michael Winter, *St. Peter and the Popes*, Baltimore: Helicon, 1960, 66)

15. Was St. Bernard an Opponent of Papal Supremacy?

He complains (Lib. 1 de Consider. ad Eugen.) that the ambitious, avaricious, demoniacal, sacrilegious, fornicators, incestuous, and similar miscreants, flocked from all quarters of the world to Rome, that by apostolic authority they might acquire or retain ecclesiastical honours: that fraud, circumvention, and violence, prevailed. The mode of judging causes then in use he describes as execrable, as disgraceful, not only to the Church, but the bar. He exclaims that the Church is filled with the ambitious: that not one is more afraid to perpetrate crimes than robbers in their den when they share the spoils of the traveller. "Few (say he) look to the mouth of the legislator, but all to his hands. Not without cause, however: for their hands do the whole business of the Pope. What kind of thing is it when those are bought by the spoils of the Church, who say to you, Well done, well done? The life of the poor is sown in the highways of the rich: silver glitters in the mire: they run together from all sides: it is not the poorer that takes it up, but the stronger, or, perhaps, he who runs fastest. That custom, however, or rather that death, comes not of you: I wish it would end in you. While these things are going on, you, a pastor, come forth robed in much costly clothing. If I might presume to say it, this is more the pasture of demons than of sheep. Peter, forsooth, acted thus; Paul sported thus. Your court has been more accustomed to receive good men than to make them. The bad do not gain much there, but the good degenerate." Then when he describes the abuses of appeals, no pious man can read them without being horrified. At length, speaking of the unbridled cupidity of the Roman See in usurping jurisdiction, he thus concludes (Lib. 3 de Concil.), "I express the murmur and common complaint of the churches. Their cry is, that they are maimed and dismembered. There are none, or very few, who do not lament or fear that plague. Do you ask what plague? Abbots are encroached upon by bishops, bishops by archbishops, &c. It is strange if this can be excused. By thus acting, you prove that you have the fulness of power, but not the fulness of righteousness. You do this because you are able; but whether you also ought to do it is the question. You are appointed to preserve, not to envy, the honour and rank of each." I have thought it proper to quote these few passages out of many, partly that my readers may see how grievously the Church had then fallen, partly, too, that they may see

with what grief and lamentation all pious men beheld this calamity. (IV, 7:18)

St. Bernard thundered against sin and corruption, as he should have. But I see nothing here indicating that he wanted to ditch the papacy, let alone the Church, and start anew, as the “reformers” did. Nor did he rail against all popes. He liked Pope Innocent II (r. 1130–1143) quite a bit:

Innocent II is praised by all, especially by St. Bernard, as a man of irreproachable character.

(*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, “Pope Innocent II”)

But his support for the office of the papacy extended far beyond admiration of one man. Writing in 1148, to the new Pope Eugene II, he exclaims:

Who are you? The high priest, the Supreme Pontiff. You are the prince of the bishops, you are the heir of the Apostles; in primacy you are Abel, in governing you are Noah, in patriarchate you are Abraham, in orders you are Melchisedech, in dignity you are Aaron, in authority you are Moses, in judgment you are Samuel, in power you are Peter, by anointing you are Christ. You are the one to whom the keys have been given, to whom the sheep have been entrusted.

(from *De consideratione*; cited in Christopher Ryan, *The Religious Roles of the Papacy*, Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1985, 119–120)

It is true that there are other doorkeepers of heaven and shepherds of flocks; but you are more glorious than all of these, to the degree that you have inherited a name more excellent than theirs. They have flocks assigned to them, one flock to each; to you all are assigned, a single flock to a single shepherd. You are the one shepherd not only of all the sheep, but of all the shepherds.... Do you ask how I can prove this? From the word of the Lord. For to whom, and I include not only bishops but Apostles, were all the sheep entrusted so absolutely and completely? “If you love me Peter, feed my sheep.” ... To whom is it not clear that he did

not exclude any, but assigned them all? There is no exception where there is no distinction.

(Ibid., 120)

And perhaps the rest of the disciples were present when the Lord, entrusting all to one man, commended unity to all in one flock with one shepherd ... James, who appeared as a pillar of the Church, was content with only Jerusalem, leaving to Peter the universal Church.... The power of the others is bound by definite limits; yours extends even over those who have received power over others. If cause exists, can you not close heaven to a bishop, depose him from the episcopacy, and even give him over to Satan? Your privilege is affirmed, therefore, both in the keys given to you and in the sheep entrusted to you.

(Ibid., 121)

[A]lthough each of the others has his own ship, to you is entrusted ... the universal Church which is spread throughout the whole world.

(Ibid., 122)

Before everything else, you should consider that the Holy Roman Church, over which God has established you as head, is the mother of churches ...

(Ibid., 123)

St. Bernard (vastly differently from Calvin and Luther) holds to the indefectibility of Rome:

I consider it most especially proper that damages to faith should be mended in the very place where faith can undergo no falling away. This surely is the prerogative of your See. For to whom else was it ever said: "I have prayed for you," Peter, "that your faith should not fail"?... Therefore, what the rest of the text says is demanded of the successor of Peter. "And you," it says, "when once you have turned, strengthen your brothers." Surely that is now necessary. The time has come, most beloved Father, for you to recognize your primacy, to prove your zeal, to honour your ministry. I doing so you will clearly fulfil your role as Vicar

of Peter, whose See you also hold, if by your warnings you strengthen the hearts of those fluctuating in faith and if by your authority you destroy those who corrupt the faith.

(*Ibid.*, 124; from Epistle 190 to Pope Innocent II)

Jesus gave to Peter and the popes, his successors, universal jurisdiction, as St. Bernard believed, but not in such a way that bishops did not have authority in their own regions, too. The popes were not to be some kind of gods on earth. In the same works I cited from St. Bernard above, he also asserted a certain brotherhood, within the hierarchy, without denying in the least bit the pope's preeminent position:

[Y]ou are not the lord of bishops, but one of them ...

(*Ibid.*, 123; from *De consideratione*)

[Y]ou have been elected to the supreme position ... Not, in my opinion, to dominate ...

(*Ibid.*, 125)

I do not think it is unconditionally yours but is subject to limitations. It seems to me that you have been entrusted with stewardship over the world, not given possession of it.

(*Ibid.*, 126)

You are wrong if you think your apostolic power, which is supreme, is the only power instituted by God.... there are intermediate and lesser ones.

(*Ibid.*, 127)

This is Catholic “both/and” reasoning, whereas Calvin and Protestantism in general are notorious for an “either/or”, unnecessarily dichotomous outlook. There is a balance that was abused by some bad popes. We should expect this, but none of the bad popes could overcome God's power in promising indefectibility for His Church. Men can't overcome God's will.

Calvin wants to ditch the papacy to preserve the (supposed) Church. Catholics retort that it is impossible for any pope (even one of the very few corrupt, personally immoral ones) to cause the Church *to defect in the first place*.

Therefore, eliminating the papacy as an office doesn't "save the Church." Rather, it deforms what is God's will for the governance of the Church.

16. Pope John XXII's Error and Papal Infallibility

But if they would have the privilege which they claim to be confirmed, they must expunge from their list of pontiffs John XXII, who publicly maintained that the soul is mortal, and perishes with the body till the day of resurrection. (IV, 7:28)

Pope John XXII denied that souls would behold the Beatific Vision prior to the Last Judgment. He also appeared to assert the notion of soul sleep, which was posited by a few fathers. This was the position that Martin Luther either adopted, or came very close to espousing. It had already been condemned by the Councils of Lyons (1274), and later by Florence (1439) and Trent (1545–1563). But the pope did not dogmatically bind the faithful to it (what the Church claims for infallibility). *The Catholic Encyclopedia* ("Pope John XXII") explains:

In the last years of John's pontificate there arose a dogmatic conflict about the Beatific Vision, which was brought on by himself, and which his enemies made use of to discredit him. Before his elevation to the Holy See, he had written a work on this question, in which he stated that the souls of the blessed departed do not see God until after the Last Judgment. After becoming pope, he advanced the same teaching in his sermons. In this he met with strong opposition, many theologians, who adhered to the usual opinion that the blessed departed did see God before the Resurrection of the Body and the Last Judgment, even calling his view heretical. A great commotion was aroused in the University of Paris when the General of the Minorites and a Dominican tried to disseminate there the pope's view. Pope John wrote to King Philip IV on the matter (November, 1333), and emphasized the fact that, as long as the Holy See had not given a decision, the theologians enjoyed perfect

freedom in this matter. In December, 1333, the theologians at Paris, after a consultation on the question, decided in favour of the doctrine that the souls of the blessed departed saw God immediately after death or after their complete purification; at the same time they pointed out that the pope had given no decision on this question but only advanced his personal opinion, and now petitioned the pope to confirm their decision. John appointed a commission at Avignon to study the writings of the Fathers, and to discuss further the disputed question. In a consistory held on 3 January, 1334, the pope explicitly declared that he had never meant to teach aught contrary to Holy Scripture or the rule of faith and in fact had not intended to give any decision whatever. Before his death he withdrew his former opinion, and declared his belief that souls separated from their bodies enjoyed in heaven the Beatific Vision.

And to show you that the whole See with its chief props then utterly fell, none of the Cardinals opposed his madness, only the Faculty of Paris urged the king to insist on a recantation. The king interdicted his subjects from communion with him, unless he would immediately recant, and published his interdict in the usual way by a herald. Thus necessitated, he abjured his error. This example relieves me from the necessity of disputing further with my opponents, when they say that the Roman See and its pontiffs cannot err in the faith, from its being said to Peter, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." (IV, 7:28)

The important thing was that there were many in the Church who persuaded the pope that he was in error. That's perfectly Catholic. The notion of papal infallibility was never absolute. It specifically referred to extraordinary papal utterances. This instance was clearly not one of those, because the pope had made no public, *binding* decree. It was strictly his private opinion. This distinction was made very clear in, for example, St. Francis de Sales' work, *The Catholic Controversy*, written around 1596: just thirty-seven or so years after Calvin's final edition of the *Institutes*:

When he teaches the whole Church as shepherd, in general matters of faith and morals, then there is nothing but doctrine and truth. And in fact everything a king says is not a law or an edict, but that only which a

king says as king and as a legislator. So everything the Pope says is not canon law or of legal obligation; he must mean to define and to lay down the law for the sheep, and he must keep the due order and form.

We must not think that in everything and everywhere his judgment is infallible, but then only when he gives judgment on a matter of faith in questions necessary to the whole Church; for in particular cases which depend on human fact he can err, there is no doubt, though it is not for us to control him in these cases save with all reverence, submission, and discretion. Theologians have said, in a word, that he can err in questions of fact, not in questions of right; that he can err *extra cathedram*, outside the chair of Peter, that is, as a private individual, by writings and bad example.

But he cannot err when he is *in cathedra*, that is, when he intends to make an instruction and decree for the guidance of the whole Church, when he means to confirm his brethren as supreme pastor, and to conduct them into the pastures of the faith. For then it is not so much man who determines, resolves, and defines as it is the Blessed Holy Spirit by man, which Spirit, according to the promise made by Our Lord to the Apostles, teaches all truth to the Church.

(translated by Henry B. Mackey, Rockford, Illinois: TAN Books, 1989, 306–307)

Certainly by this shameful lapse he fell from the faith, ... (IV, 7:28)

Not at all; he was wrong about a private opinion having to do with an “anthropological” and eschatological question, not salvation or Christology. The Mind of the Church prevailed. It’s a non-issue. Did Martin Luther “fall from the faith” too, when he asserted soul-sleep?

17. When Did the Pope Become Antichrist?

Shall we recognise the Apostolic See where we see nothing but horrible apostacy? Shall he be the vicar of Christ who, by his furious efforts in persecuting the Gospel, plainly declares himself to be Antichrist? Shall he be the successor of Peter who goes about with fire and sword demolishing everything that Peter built?. Shall he be the Head of the

Church who, after dissevering the Church from Christ, her only true Head, tears and lacerates her members? Rome, indeed, was once the mother of all the churches, but since she began to be the seat of Antichrist she ceased to be what she was. (IV, 7:24)

And what year did this momentous event take place? Isn't it interesting that Calvin wants to make this sort of definite assertion, while never specifying the date when it supposedly occurred. Rest assured, so Calvin tells us, that Rome (Babylon the Great) has fallen. Yet we know not *when*. Is that supposed to impress any reasonable person on *either* side of the sad debate?

To some we seem slanderous and petulant, when we call the Roman Pontiff Antichrist. But those who think so perceive not that they are bringing a charge of intemperance against Paul, after whom we speak, nay, in whose very words we speak. But lest any one object that Paul's words have a different meaning, and are wrested by us against the Roman Pontiff, I will briefly show that they can only be understood of the Papacy. Paul says that Antichrist would sit in the temple of God (2 Thess. 2:4). (IV, 7:25)

Paul writes about the Antichrist, but never argues that the Church will be completely overtaken by him. He also states in the passage cited above, that he will proclaim "himself to be God":

2 Thessalonians 2:3b–4 ... the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition, [4] who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

No pope has ever claimed *that*. If Calvin thinks otherwise, it is easy enough to document it. But he doesn't. If all "proof" means is bare assertion with no documentation, then anyone could prove anything by simply proclaiming it. In context, all of this seems to occur, too, not long before the Second Coming:

2 Thessalonians 2:8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, and the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by his appearing and his coming.

As we know, it has been almost 500 years now since the “Reformation” began and here we still are, with probably a good deal more time to go before the end. I see nothing in the Bible about the Antichrist reigning for 500 years. But I see things about three-and-a half and seven years, in the book of Revelation.

Calvin’s scenario is refuted on those grounds alone. He appeared (like Luther) to expect a Second Coming very soon, and the destruction of the papacy. He and his followers have been severely disappointed on both scores. The Catholic Church is alive and kicking, now, as it was, then.

In another passage, the Spirit, portraying him in the person of Antiochus, says that his reign would be with great swelling words of vanity (Dan. 7:25). Hence we infer that his tyranny is more over souls than bodies, a tyranny set up in opposition to the spiritual kingdom of Christ. (IV, 7:25)

How does this prove that he is the pope? Calvin merely assumes what he needs to prove, which is not solid argument.

Then his nature is such, that he abolishes not the name either of Christ or the Church, but rather uses the name of Christ as a pretext, and lurks under the name of Church as under a mask. But though all the heresies and schisms which have existed from the beginning belong to the kingdom of Antichrist, yet when Paul foretells that defection will come, he by the description intimates that that seat of abomination will be erected, when a kind of universal defection comes upon the Church, though many members of the Church scattered up and down should continue in the true unity of the faith. But when he adds, that in his own time, the mystery of iniquity, which was afterwards to be openly manifested, had begun to work in secret, we thereby understand that this calamity was neither to be introduced by one man, nor to terminate in one man (see Calv. In 2 Thess. 2:3; Dan. 7:9). Moreover, when the mark by which he distinguishes Antichrist is, that he would rob God of his honour and take it to himself, he gives the leading feature which we ought to follow in searching out Antichrist; especially when pride of this description proceeds to the open devastation of the Church. Seeing then it is certain that the Roman Pontiff has impudently transferred to

himself the most peculiar properties of God and Christ, there cannot be a doubt that he is the leader and standard-bearer of an impious and abominable kingdom. (IV, 7:25)

How so? Have popes claimed to be eternal or omniscient or omnipotent or omnipresent or outside of time? Did they claim to have created the world (etc., etc.)? Those are the “most peculiar properties of God and Christ” and so anyone claiming to be God would have to make some allusion to them. They would talk, in other words, as Jesus did. But this has never happened. Thus, Calvin is flailing away, producing empty words that have no content or application to the matter at hand. Calvin has not proven to the slightest degree that the Antichrist will be a pope or collection of popes.

18. The Donation of Constantine Forgery

As far as pertains to the donation of Constantine, those who are moderately versant in the history of the time have no need of being told, that the claim is not only fabulous but also absurd. But to say nothing of history, Gregory alone is a fit and most complete witness to this effect. For wherever he speaks of the emperor he calls him His Most Serene Lord, and himself his unworthy servant. Again, in another passage he says, “Let not our Lord in respect of worldly power be too soon offended with priests, but with excellent consideration, on account of him whose servants they are, let him while ruling them also pay them due reverence.” We see how in a common subjection he desires to be accounted one of the people. For he there pleads not another’s but his own cause. Again, “I trust in Almighty God that he will give long life to pious rulers, and place us under your hand according to his mercy.” I have not adduced these things here from any intention thoroughly to discuss the question of Constantine’s donation, but only to show my readers by the way, how childishly the Romanists tell lies when they attempt to claim an earthly empire for their Pontiff. The more vile the impudence of Augustine Steuchus, who, in so desperate a cause, presumed to lend his labour and his tongue to the Roman Pontiff. Valla, as was easy for a man of learning and acuteness to do, had completely refuted this fable. And yet, as he was little versant in ecclesiastical

affairs, he had not said all that was relevant to the subject. Steuchus breaks in, and scatters his worthless quibbles, trying to bury the clear light. And certainly he pleads the cause of his master not less frigidly than some wit might, under pretence of defending the same view, support that of Valla. But the cause is a worthy one, which the Pope may well hire such patrons to defend; equally worthy are the hired ravers whom the hope of gain may deceive, as was the case with Eugubinus. (IV, 11:12)

Calvin rants about “how childishly the Romanists tell lies when they attempt to claim an earthly empire for their Pontiff”. It’s his usual rhetoric (most of which I have bypassed in this critique): Catholics are a pack of rascally scoundrels. Lorenzo Valla (1406–1457), whom he does, at least, mention: the main person responsible for exposing the forgery of the Donation of Constantine, was a Catholic priest.

So the noble Catholic priest proved that most Catholics are liars. How sensible! Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464), who took the same position, was a Cardinal. Reginald Pecocke, Bishop of Chichester from 1450–1457, arrived independently at the same conclusion, as did Pope Pius II in 1453.

All of this occurred in Catholic circles before Luther or Calvin were even born, and more than fifty years prior to the beginning of the Protestant Revolution. Catholics discovered and exposed this forgery. This proves exactly *nothing* as to the general wickedness or honesty (or lack thereof) of Catholics, or whether Catholic beliefs are true or false.

All it proves is that there are good and bad men who call themselves Catholics (and that such things as forgeries occur). Did Calvin fancy that it was any different among Protestants? If so, then he was surely among the most naive of men. If he knew better, why did he bother to bring this up?

19. Do “Bad Popes” Disprove the Papacy?

But that I may not be forced to discuss and follow out each point singly, I again appeal to those who, in the present day, would be thought the best and most faithful defenders of the Roman See, whether they are not ashamed to defend the existing state of the Papacy, which is clearly a hundred times more corrupt than in the days of Gregory and Bernard, though even then these holy men were so much displeased with it.

Gregory everywhere complains (Lib. 1 Ep. 5; *item*, Ep. 7, 25, &c.) that he was distracted above measure by foreign occupations: that under colour of the episcopate he was taken back to the world, being subject to more worldly cares than he remembered to have ever had when a laic; that he was so oppressed by the trouble of secular affairs, as to be unable to raise his mind to things above; that he was so tossed by the many billows of causes, and afflicted by the tempests of a tumultuous life, that he might well say, "I am come into the depths of the sea." It is certain, that amid these worldly occupations, he could teach the people in sermons, admonish in private, and correct those who required it; order the Church, give counsel to his colleagues, and exhort them to their duty. Moreover, some time was left for writing, and yet he deplores it as his calamity, that he was plunged into the very deepest sea. If the administration at that time was a sea, what shall we say of the present Papacy? (IV, 7:22)

As we have seen previously, Pope St. Gregory the Great and St. Bernard of Clairvaux were firm believers in papal supremacy. Obviously, then, whatever shortcomings occurred in practice, they did not arrive at Calvin's conclusion, and so remain far more "Catholic witnesses" than "Protestant" ones.

The office is not overthrown by corruption, since it was instituted by Christ and will be preserved by Him. In earlier sections of his Book IV (1:13–17, 1:24–29, and 2:1), Calvin understood full well the distinction between permanent office and corrupt individual officeholder, but for some reason he doesn't apply that to the papacy. Rather, he wants to eliminate it. For Calvin, papal corruption gets worse and worse till he feels compelled to throw out the "baby" (the office of the papacy) with the corrupt "bathwater" of abuses of individual popes. This is very shoddy (and quite unbiblical) reasoning.

For what resemblance is there between the periods? Now there are no sermons, no care for discipline, no zeal for churches, no spiritual function; nothing, in short, but the world. And yet this labyrinth is lauded as if nothing could be found better ordered and arranged. What complaints also does Bernard pour forth, what groans does he utter, when he beholds the vices of his own age? (IV, 7:22)

All is extremes, in Calvin's eyes. St. Bernard was a genuine reformer in the literal sense, not one who "reformed" by *eliminating* institutions and doctrines that had been believed continuously by the Church for many hundreds of years.

What then would he have done on beholding this iron, or, if possible, worse than iron, age of ours? (IV, 7:22)

He would have done exactly the same as he did when he lived: call for repentance and reform of the papacy: not *abolishing* it. There had been several periods at least as decadent and corrupt as the 16th century. They didn't cause saints to proceed as Luther and Calvin did, with their bulldozers and theological / ecclesiological demolition crews.

How dishonest, therefore, not only obstinately to defend as sacred and divine what all the saints have always with one mouth disapproved, but to abuse their testimony in favour of the Papacy, which, it is evident, was altogether unknown to them? Although I admit, in respect to the time of Bernard, that all things were so corrupt as to make it not unlike our own. (IV, 7:22)

This is a masterpiece of sophistical redefinition. In the first place, no true Catholic reformer or defender will disagree about the *corruptions* that St. Bernard decries, and it is dishonest to pretend that they would. Catholics then and now defend the office and institution of the papacy, while detesting any sins committed by individual popes. But for Calvin, corruption is the *essence* of a thing (at least of any and all Catholic things).

By the same token, manifest excesses—that Luther and Calvin both abominated—in the new denominational, sectarian system brought about by Luther's appeal to individual subjectivism (always, of course, piously cloaked in the language of "Scripture Alone" and "perspicuous Scripture")—would mean that Protestantism, too, should be discarded because of its internal corruptions (or consistent developments that bring into question original premises).

But no corruption in *his* system is enough to get Calvin to even *question* it, let alone call for its abolition. *Any* corruption of practice in Catholicism, on the other hand, is sufficient to call for drastic measures.

St. Bernard did not at all arrive at the conclusion that Calvin did, so why does he keep citing him? I submit that it is because he thinks he can make rhetorical and sophistical hay out of citing the Great Man, even though his views do not ultimately support Calvin's mission. Calvin cleverly acts as if the contrary is the case, and that St. Bernard, were he alive in Calvin's time, would be magically transformed into a good Protestant (just as he wrongly thinks would be the case with St. Augustine).

But it betrays a want of all sense of shame to seek any excuse from that middle period—namely, from that of Leo, Gregory, and the like—for it is just as if one were to vindicate the monarchy of the Cæsars by lauding the ancient state of the Roman empire; in other words, were to borrow the praises of liberty in order to eulogise tyranny. (IV, 7:22)

But this argument works at cross-purposes to Calvin's aim: to show the essential illegitimacy of the papacy, so that it could be eliminated. The papacy was either instituted by Christ or it was not. Catholics provide many arguments affirming that indeed it *was*. Calvin deals with those in only a grossly inadequate, dismissively cursory fashion. But that is where the heart of the dispute lies. Calvin thinks that the papacy of his time was to the papacy of Leo's and Gregory's time, like the late Roman emperors were to the original Roman Republic (i.e., a thoroughgoing corruption). But he has yet to remotely demonstrate this. It only convinces his "choir."

20. Pope Gregory VII (Hildebrand): "Impure and Wicked"?

Should any one ask at what period this fictitious empire began to emerge, five hundred years have not yet elapsed since the Roman Pontiffs were under subjection to the emperors, and no pontiff was elected without the emperor's authority. An occasion of innovating on this order was given to Gregory VII. by Henry IV., a giddy and rash man, of no prudence, great audacity, and a dissolute life. When he had the whole bishoprics of Germany in his court partly for sale, and partly exposed to plunder, Hildebrand, who had been provoked by him, seized the plausible pretext for asserting his claim. As his cause seemed good

and pious, it was viewed with great favour, while Henry, on account of the insolence of his government, was generally hated by the princes. At length Hildebrand, who took the name of Gregory VII., an impure and wicked man, betrayed his sinister intentions. On this he was deserted by many who had joined him in his conspiracy. He gained this much, however, that his successors were not only able to shake off the yoke with impunity, but also to bring the emperors into subjection to them. (IV, 11:13)

Calvin assumes that it is far worse for the Church to temporarily be “over” the state than vice versa. Why is that, I wonder? One can make, I think, quite legitimate criticisms of excessive power in certain periods of Catholic history. We Catholics do this ourselves. But why is secular rule over the Church regarded (seemingly without question) as an inherently superior state of affairs? I confess that I have never understood this; nor have I comprehended the strange attraction that this manifest folly held for the founders of Protestantism.

That said, is it a fair appraisal to call Pope Gregory VII (Hildebrand: pope from 1073–1085) “an impure and wicked man” with “sinister intentions”? Recent (non-Catholic) estimations of his character are a bit more positive. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* summarizes modern historical opinion:

Though Gregory was once regarded as an ambitious tyrant, most modern historians have revised this judgement and are agreed on his purity of intention and his desire for ‘justice.’ In his own lifetime the Church suffered division, and he himself incurred much criticism; but Gregory’s example, and the activities of his successors (esp. Urban II) did much to regenerate the Church.

(edited by F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2nd edition, 1983, “Gregory VII,” 596)

Calvin makes out that Pope Gregory VII’s reign was some radical innovation or brand-new thing. Again, many modern historians would not agree with his assessment:

Bodies of canon law compiled from the ninth century onwards maintain his supremacy in matters of dogma and discipline. Monasteries and churches placed themselves under the protection of St Peter and hence of the Roman pontiff. Secular rulers journeyed to Rome to settle ecclesiastical disputes involving their domains. Gregory and his supporters were also out to prove that the reforms they proposed were by no means innovations but merely a return to normal practice.

(Philippe Wolff, *The Awakening of Europe* [*The Pelican History of European Thought*, volume 1], translated by Anne Carter, Baltimore; Penguin Books, 1968, 147, 234–235)

In other words, what he did was a *reform* (as Calvin and his cohorts claim that *they* were doing), not a *revolution* (as the Protestant founders advocated in fact and especially as occurred as a result: intended or not).

Richard William Southern was President of St. John's College, Oxford, and also of the Royal Historical Society. He viewed the Gregorian reform period similarly, despite his “anti-papal” bias, as indicated by his use of the term “papal pretensions” (p. 100):

The minds of these men [post-1050] turned back to a happier period of papal enterprise. They dedicated themselves to the task of restoring the papacy to the position which it had held in a remote past and ought to hold again. Above all they wished to restore the papacy to the controlling and directing role in the church that (as they thought) it had once had ... We have already noticed the extent to which the popes of the earlier period were, so to speak, swallowed up in the personality of St Peter and were regarded simply as the mouthpiece of the Apostle. Gregory VII, a child of the Roman church from infancy, shared this point of view.

(*Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* [*The Pelican History of the Church*, volume 2], Baltimore; Penguin Books, 1970, 100–101, 103)

Pope Gregory VII was merely developing what had been a long chain of thought and practice, grounded in Scripture itself (Petrine primacy), going back to earlier popes such as Innocent I, Gelasius, Nicholas I, Agatho, Leo the Great, and Gregory the Great.

21. Popes as “Tyrants” vs. Calvin’s “Authority”

When the Pope extends his jurisdiction without limit, he does great and atrocious injustice not only to other bishops, but to each single church, tearing and dismembering them, that he may build his see upon their ruins. When he exempts himself from all tribunals, and wishes to reign in the manner of a tyrant, holding his own caprice to be his only law, the thing is too insulting, and too foreign to ecclesiastical rule, to be on any account submitted to. It is altogether abhorrent, not only from pious feeling, but also from common sense. (IV, 7:21)

When John Calvin extends his authority without limit, he does great and atrocious injustice not only to all bishops, whom he has thrown out of the Church, but to each single church, tearing and dismembering them, that he may exercise his arbitrary authority upon their ruins. And what tribunal could ever bind Calvin and Luther? They simply spurned them all insofar as they disagreed with them.

It is quite comical, therefore, for Calvin to rail against papal supremacy, seeing that he was ultimately unaccountable to anyone, by his own design. At least popes had an express commission from Christ through Peter. Calvin had a commission from the city council of Geneva or some such. Yet he feels the liberty to dissent against anything whatever, no matter how grounded in history and dogma it may have been.

Chapter Three

III. Salvation, Justification, Sanctification, Sacraments, and the Spiritual Life

1. Calvin's Accusation of Catholic Semi-Pelagianism

For we are fellow-laborers with God. Here is the best argument. It is the Lord's work that we are employed in, and it is to him that we have devoted our labors: hence, as he is faithful and just, he will not disappoint us of our reward. That man, accordingly, is mistaken who looks to men, or depends merely on their remuneration. Here we have an admirable commendation of the ministry—that while God could accomplish the work entirely himself, he calls us, puny mortals, to be as it were his coadjutors, and makes use of us as instruments. As to the perversion of this statement by the Papists, for supporting their system of free-will, it is beyond measure silly, for Paul shows here, not what men can effect by their natural powers, but what the Lord accomplishes through means of them by his grace.

(*Commentary on 1 Corinthians [3:9]*, translated by John Pringle)

Calvin's caricature is not Catholic teaching at all. Catholics don't believe men can do any good "by their natural powers," nor do we deny *sola gratia* in the slightest. Simply *cooperating* with the grace is not "human generation"; it is "God generation." The Council of Trent is very clear on this:

Canons on Justification

Canon I. If any one saith, that man may be justified before God by his own works, whether done through the teaching of human nature, or that of the law, without the grace of God through Jesus Christ; let him be anathema.

Canon III. If any one saith, that without the prevenient inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and without his help, man can believe, hope, love, or be penitent as he ought, so as that the grace of Justification may be bestowed upon him; let him be anathema.

Canon X. If any one saith, that men are just without the justice of Christ, whereby He merited for us to be justified; or that it is by that justice itself that they are formally just; let him be anathema.

Chapter V- ... the beginning of the said justification is to be derived from the prevenient grace of God through Jesus Christ ... without any merits existing on their parts ... yet is he not able, by his own free-will, without the grace of God, to move himself into justice in His sight ...

Chapter VIII- ... none of those things which precede justification—whether faith or works—merit the grace itself of justification. For if it be a grace, it is not now by works; otherwise, as the same Apostle says, grace is no more grace.

Calvin himself, in his *Acts of the Council of Trent, with the Antidote* (1547), states regarding Canons I and III above,

To Canons I, II, and III, I say Amen.

(from *Selected Works of John Calvin: Tracts and Letters*, Volume 3, Tracts, Part 3, edited and translated by Henry Beveridge, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1983, p. 147; reprinted from the same work, published by the Calvin Translation Society, Edinburgh, 1851)

Calvin's problem, then, seems to be one of misunderstanding the logic involved, for how can he agree, on the one hand, with the Tridentine statement, denying: "that man may be justified before God by his own works, whether done through the teaching of human nature, or that of the law, without the grace of God through Jesus Christ", yet also assert in his commentary above that Catholics supposedly believe that "men can effect by their natural powers" what in fact "the Lord accomplishes through means of them by his grace"?

Perhaps his commentary was written before the clarifications of Trent, and we can grant his ignorance, in charity. His *Antidote to Trent*, however,

continues to distort and misrepresent Tridentine, Catholic teaching on soteriology; for example:

[T]heir definition at length contains nothing else than the trite dogma of the schools: that men are justified partly by the grace of God and partly by their own works; thus only shewing themselves somewhat more modest than Pelagius was.

(*Ibid.*, p. 108)

In fact, this never has been Catholic teaching. Calvin (and following his lead, many of the millions of Calvinists and other Protestants for almost 500 years) couldn't be more mistaken. Catholicism has *always* condemned Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism, and Trent does so as well. The Second Council of Orange (529 A. D.), accepted as dogma by the Catholic Church, dogmatically taught in its Canon VII:

If anyone asserts that we can, by our natural powers, think as we ought, or choose any good pertaining to the salvation of eternal life ... without the illumination and inspiration of the Holy Spirit ... he is misled by a heretical spirit ... [goes on to cite Jn 15:5, 2 Cor 3:5]

St. Augustine wrote (and the Catholic Church wholeheartedly concurs):

What merit of man is there before grace by which he can achieve grace, as only grace works every one of our good merits in us, and as God, when He crowns our merits, crowns nothing else but His own gifts?

(Epistles 194,5,19)

Yet Calvin continues his rather spectacular and inexcusable misrepresentation of Tridentine teaching:

But the Neptunian fathers, in a new smithy, forge what was unknown to Augustine, viz., that the reception of grace is not of God, inasmuch as it is by the free movement of our own will we assent to God calling.

(*Ibid.*, 111)

This is expressly contradicted by Chapter V:

[Y]et is he not able, by his own free-will, without the grace of God, to move himself into justice in His sight ...

And it is denounced in Chapter VIII:

[N]one of those things which precede justification—whether faith or works—merit the grace itself of justification. For if it be a grace, it is not now by works; otherwise, as the same Apostle says, grace is no more grace.

Therefore, the “reception of grace” in Catholic soteriology is not only *not* “not of God” (as Calvin wrongly thinks), but—quite the contrary—*all* of God, since free-will could do *nothing* towards God and grace, but for God’s grace itself. Free-will and anything it could do are also part of “those things which precede justification,” referred to in Chapter VIII. It cannot merit grace or do anything on its own to predispose it in that direction. Calvin is greatly mistaken.

Part of his problem, and that of Calvinists generally, is a false notion of free-will and God’s grace somehow being inexorably, inherently opposed: an “either/or” mentality where there need not be one. St. Paul views them as *working together*, with the free will being entirely *caused* by God. Our work is God’s work insofar as we do what He commands us and enables us to do, as St. Augustine notes above, and as seen in many passages; notably Ephesians 2:8–10 and Philippians 2:12–13.

Calvin himself understands this in some fashion, by citing St. Augustine in supposed opposition to Catholic teaching. Once again, he assumes that St. Augustine is teaching something the Catholic Church doesn’t teach, when in fact, we agree entirely, as shown in the above decrees. Here is what Calvin cites from Augustine:

We therefore will, but God works in us also to will. We work, but God causes us also to work. The good which we possess not without our own will we should never possess unless he worked in us also to will. It is certain that we will when we are willing, but he makes us to be willing. It is certain that we do when we do, but he makes us to do by affording most effectual strength to the will.

(Aug. Lib. ii de Bon. Persev. cap. 13; Lib. ii 23, de Grat. et Liber. Arbit. / *Ibid.*, 112–113)

It is strange that Calvin can't see that St. Augustine's teaching is also *Catholic* teaching. Right after these citations of Augustine he resumes his absurd distortion of Trent:

The whole may be thus summed up—Their error consists in sharing the work between God and ourselves, so as to transfer to ourselves the obedience of a pious will in assenting to divine grace, whereas this is the proper work of God himself.

(*Ibid.*, 113)

Catholics wholeheartedly *agree* with St. Augustine and Calvin that “this is the proper work of God himself.” We (and also historic Protestant Arminians) absolutely *deny* that we teach a Pelagian or Semi-Pelagian notion of “sharing the work between God and ourselves,” as if man's part of that generates or produces grace or merit on its own. The true biblical and Catholic teaching is paradoxical, but it doesn't deny that man has free-will altogether. Calvin is the one who is sadly bound by unnecessary false dichotomies in his thought.

The above exposition shows yet again that Catholicism and Calvinism are indeed in quite close agreement in several respects. The interpretation of 1 Corinthians 3:9 is one instance where there is little or no disagreement at all, once Catholic teaching is correctly comprehended.

Unfortunately, John Calvin (while correctly exegeting the verse) did not do such a good job in portraying a Catholic view of it (which is virtually identical to his own). Christians (sadly) have enough true divisions without inventing ones that don't exist.

2. Cooperation With God's Grace (Synergism) and Merit

If we ascribe either an increase or confirmation of faith to creatures, injustice is done to the Spirit of God, who alone ought to be regarded as its author. But we do not rob him of the merit of confirming and increasing faith; nay, rather, we maintain that that which confirms and

increases faith, is nothing else than the preparing of our minds by his internal illumination to receive that confirmation which is set forth by the sacraments. (IV, 14:10)

An increase of faith can be ascribed to creatures as long as we don't deny that God is the *ultimate* cause of this. Calvin's "either/or" mentality doesn't allow him to be able to ascribe anything to human beings: not even, apparently, a cooperative effort initiated (yes indeed), by God, but still given assent to by the creature. Scripture is clear in many ways about our participation in the entire process.

This is evident, for example, in the supreme emphasis on works and what we do, in biblical scenes having to do with Judgment Day. It's apparent again in many passages asserting the existence of our own work even with regard to salvation:

Acts 2:40–41 And he testified with many other words and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." [41] So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

Philippians 2:12–13 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; [13] for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

1 Timothy 4:16 Take heed to yourself and to your teaching; hold to that, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Also, we can note many passages that assert meritoriousness of human acts and differential rewards (something that Calvin vehemently denies):

Matthew 5:11–12: "Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your *reward* is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you." (cf. Mk. 9:41; Jas. 1:12; Rev. 2:10, 3:11–12)

Matthew 19:29: "And every one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will

receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.” (cf. 19:21)

Luke 6:38: “give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. *For the measure you give will be the measure you get back*” (cf. 6:35; Col. 3:23–24)

1 Corinthians 3:6–9: I planted, Apol’los watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. He who plants and he who waters are equal, and each shall *receive his wages according to his labor*. For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building. (cf. 3:14; 2 Cor. 9:6; 2 Tim. 4:8)

2 Corinthians 6:1: Working together with him, then, we entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain.

Ephesians 6:8: knowing that whatever good any one does, he will *receive the same again from the Lord*, whether he is a slave or free. (cf. Matt. 16:27)

Hebrews 10:35: Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a *great reward*. (cf. 6:10; Matt. 20:4; 2 John 8)

3. Absolution and Forgiveness of Sins by the Clergy

For when Christ gave the command to the apostles, and conferred the power of forgiving sins, he not merely intended that they should loose the sins of those who should be converted from impiety to the faith of Christ; but, moreover, that they should perpetually perform this office among believers. This Paul teaches, when he says that the embassy of reconciliation has been committed to the ministers of the Church, that they may ever and anon in the name of Christ exhort the people to be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:20). Therefore, in the communion of saints our sins are constantly forgiven by the ministry of the Church, when presbyters or bishops, to whom the office has been committed, confirm pious consciences, in the hope of pardon and forgiveness by the promises of the gospel, and that as well in public as in private, as the case requires. For there are many who, from their infirmity, stand in need of special pacification, and Paul declares that he testified of the

grace of Christ not only in the public assembly, but from house to house, reminding each individually of the doctrine of salvation (Acts 20:20, 21). (IV, 1:22)

This command concerning remitting and retaining sins, and that promise made to Peter concerning binding and loosing, ought to be referred to nothing but the ministry of the word.... For such things as the forgiveness of sins, the promise of eternal life, and message of salvation, cannot be in the power of man. Christ therefore testified, that in the preaching of the gospel the apostles only acted ministerially; that it was he who, by their mouths as organs, spoke and promised all; that, therefore, the forgiveness of sins which they announced was the true promise of God; the condemnation which they pronounced, the certain judgment of God. This attestation was given to all ages, and remains firm, rendering all certain and secure, that the word of the gospel, by whomsoever it may be preached, is the very word of God, promulgated at the supreme tribunal, written in the book of life, ratified firm and fixed in heaven. We now understand that the power of the keys is simply the preaching of the gospel in those places, and in so far as men are concerned, it is not so much power as ministry. Properly speaking, Christ did not give this power to men but to his word, of which he made men the ministers. (IV, 11:1)

Calvin intends more or less a preaching function (which is classic “low church” Protestantism): tell people the message of reconciliation and they (by God’s grace and His will) will receive it of their own accord without need of sacramental absolution or even baptismal regeneration.

Calvin neglects to also include the *transactional* element of forgiveness of sins, through a priest, acting as the representative of God, as opposed to a mere declaration of the same (the preaching of the gospel of forgiveness). Calvin wants to spiritualize all this away, just as he (largely) does with baptism and the Eucharist. Binding and loosing are not merely the equivalent to the gospel: another way of saying “gospel.”

The priest does not only, merely declare (by preaching or evangelizing) the *availability* of forgiveness and reconciliation through God’s grace, to be subjectively appropriated by the individual; he also *brings it about as a*

sacramental agent. Calvin apparently rejects this latter element. But it is entirely biblical:

Matthew 16:19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Matthew 18:18 Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

John 20:21–23 Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

It’s clearly not just “the word” (i.e., preaching and teaching, as Protestants love to emphasize) but a *sacramental* exchange (repentance, confession, absolution, and penance). That was how it had been interpreted all through the centuries. Calvin wants to eliminate human participation, because for him (in his illogical system of thought), human cooperation must mean (or very often means) that somehow God is denigrated and lowered.

There are several other verses as well, that presuppose that God’s forgiveness can be channeled through men. For example, St. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 2:7, 10: “you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him ... Any one whom you forgive, I also forgive. What I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ.” These were not sins committed against Paul. The man in question appears to be the one mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5:1–5 (adultery; incest).

In that passage Paul “binds” and judges the man’s sins (5:3–4), and urges the Corinthians to concur in the judgment (5:4–5). When he is forgiven, it is an instance of loosing. Obviously, much more is going on than the preaching of the gospel. It is a sacramental, contractual exchange, involving men forgiving the sins of others not committed against them.

4. The “Evangelical Counsels” and Monastic Perfection

If they deny this, I should like to know why they honour their own order only with the title of perfection, and deny it to all other divine callings. I am not unaware of the sophistical solution that their order is not so called because it contains perfection in itself, but because it is the best of all for acquiring perfection. When they would extol themselves to the people; when they would lay a snare for rash and ignorant youth; when they would assert their privileges and exalt their own dignity to the disparagement of others, they boast that they are in a state of perfection. When they are too closely pressed to be able to defend this vain arrogance, they betake themselves to the subterfuge that they have not yet obtained perfection, but that they are in a state in which they aspire to it more than others; meanwhile, the people continue to admire as if the monastic life alone were angelic, perfect, and purified from every vice. (IV, 13:11)

The Catholic Encyclopedia article “Evangelical Counsels” provides the answer to Calvin’s extreme and misguided criticisms:

Christ in the Gospels laid down certain rules of life and conduct which must be practiced by every one of His followers as the necessary condition for attaining to everlasting life. These precepts of the Gospel practically consist of the Decalogue, or Ten Commandments, of the Old Law, interpreted in the sense of the New. Besides these precepts which must be observed by all under pain of eternal damnation, He also taught certain principles which He expressly stated were not to be considered as binding upon all, or as necessary conditions without which heaven could not be attained, but rather as counsels for those who desired to do more than the minimum and to aim at Christian perfection, so far as that can be obtained here upon earth. Thus (Matthew 19:16 sq.) when the young man asked Him what he should do to obtain eternal life, Christ bade him to “keep the commandments”. That was all that was necessary in the strict sense of the word, and by thus keeping the commands which God had given eternal life could be

obtained. But when the young man pressed further, Christ told him: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor". So again, in the same chapter, He speaks of "eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven", and added, "He that can receive it, let him receive it".

This distinction between the precepts of the Gospel, which are binding on all, and the counsels, which are the subject of the vocation of the comparatively few, has ever been maintained by the Catholic Church. It has been denied by heretics in all ages, and especially by many Protestants in the sixteenth and following centuries, on the ground that, inasmuch as all Christians are at all times bound, if they would keep God's Commandments, to do their utmost, and even so will fall short of perfect obedience, no distinction between precepts and counsels can rightly be made. The opponents of the Catholic doctrine base their opposition on such texts as Luke 17:10, "When ye have done all that is commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants". It is impossible, they say, to keep the Commandments adequately. To teach further "counsels" involves either the absurdity of advising what is far beyond all human capacity, or else the impiety of minimizing the commands of Almighty God. The Catholic doctrine, however, founded, as we have seen, upon the words of Christ in the Gospel, is also supported by St. Paul. In 1 Corinthians 7, for instance, he not only presses home the duty incumbent on all Christians of keeping free from all sins of the flesh, and of fulfilling the obligations of the married state, if they have taken those obligations upon themselves, but also gives his "counsel" in favour of the unmarried state and of perfect chastity, on the ground that it is thus more possible to serve God with an undivided allegiance. Indeed, the danger in the Early Church, and even in Apostolic times, was not that the "counsels" would be neglected or denied, but that they should be exalted into commands of universal obligation, "forbidding to marry" (1 Timothy 4:3), and imposing poverty as a duty on all.

In this what antiquity can they pretend? None of the ancients ever thought of such a thing: all with one voice proclaim that not one syllable proceeded from Christ which it is not necessary to obey. (IV, 13:12)

[T]here was nothing with the Fathers less intended than to establish that kind of perfection which was afterwards fabricated by cowed monks, in order to rear up a species of double Christianity. (IV, 13:14)

By this contrast between ancient and modern monasticism, I trust I have gained my object, which was to show that our cowed monks falsely pretend the example of the primitive Church in defence of their profession; since they differ no less from the monks of that period than apes do from men. (IV, 13:16)

Renouncing wealth and possessions, or deciding to be celibate, and other similar sacrifices are not matters of command for all, but of special heroic sacrifice for those called to it. Calvin makes his characteristically sweeping claim: “*none* of the ancients ...”; “nothing with the Fathers ...” The historical record, alas, shows otherwise:

St. Ignatius of Antioch

Ye virgins, be subject to Christ in purity, not counting marriage an abomination, but desiring that which is better, not for the reproach of wedlock, but for the sake of meditating on the law.

(Epistle to the Philadelphians [Syriac version], Ch IV)

St. Clement of Alexandria

Such a person [who cannot exercise self-control] is not sinning against the covenant [by marrying], but neither is he fulfilling the highest purpose of the gospel ethic.

(*Stromata* 3.82.4; on 1 Cor 7:9; from *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, general editor: Thomas C. Oden, Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, Vol. VII: *1–2 Corinthians*, 1999, p. 62)

Origen

Some rules are given as commandments of God, while others are more flexible and left by God to the decision of the individual. The first kind are those commandments which pertain to salvation. The others are better, because even if we do not keep them, we shall still be saved. There is no

merit in doing what is obligatory, but there is in doing that which is optional.

(Commentary on 1 Corinthians 3.39.2–6; on 1 Cor 7:25; in Oden, *ibid.*, p. 69)

St. Ambrose

Marriage is good because through it the means of human continuity are found. But virginity is better, because through it are attained the inheritance of a heavenly kingdom and a continuity of heavenly rewards.

(Synodal Letters 44; in Oden, *ibid.*, p. 72)

St. Jerome

It is in our power, whether we want to be perfect. But whoever wants to be perfect, should sell all that he has ... and when he has sold, give everything to the poor.

(*Commentarium in Evangelium Matthaei*, P.L. XXVI, p. 148)

St. John Chrysostom

Having spoken then of the eunuchs that are eunuchs for naught and fruitlessly, unless with the mind they too practice temperance, and of those that are virgins for Heaven's sake, He proceeds again to say, "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it," at once making them more earnest by showing that the good work is exceeding in greatness, and not suffering the thing to be shut up in the compulsion of a law, because of His unspeakable gentleness. And this He said, when He showed it to be most possible, in order that the emulation of the free choice might be greater.

And if it is of free choice, one may say, how does He say, at the beginning, "All men do not receive it, but they to whom it is given?" That you might learn that the conflict is great, not that you should suspect any compulsory allotments. For it is given to those who will it. But He spoke thus to show that much influence from above is needed by him who enters these lists, of which influence He who is willing shall surely partake.

(Homily 62 on Matthew, PG 58:600)

Paul states that continence is better, but he does not attempt to pressure those who cannot attain to it.

(Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians 19.3; on 1 Cor 7:8; from *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, general editor: Thomas C. Oden, Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, Vol. VII: 1–2 *Corinthians*, 1999, p. 62)

St. Augustine

Whereas marriage also is good, how shall there be all goods in the Body of Christ, both the greater, forsooth, and the lesser, if all through praise and love of continence imitate? In the first place, because with the endeavor that all be continent, there will still be but few, for “not all receive this word.” But forasmuch as it is written, “He who can receive, let him receive;” then do they receive who can, when silence is not kept even toward those who cannot. Next, neither ought we to fear lest haply all receive it, and some one of lesser goods, that is, married life, be wanting in the body of Christ.

(On the Good of Widowhood)

There are also vows proper for individuals: one vows to God conjugal chastity, that he will know no other woman besides his wife: so also the woman, that she will know no other man besides her husband. Other men also vow, even though they have used such a marriage, that beyond this they will have no such thing, that they will neither desire nor admit the like: and these men have vowed a greater vow than the former. Others vow even virginity from the beginning of life, that they will even know no such thing as those who having experienced have relinquished: and these men have vowed the greatest vow. Others vow that their house shall be a place of entertainment for all the Saints that may come: a great vow they vow. Another vows to relinquish all his goods to be distributed to the poor, and go into a community, into a society of the Saints: a great vow he doth vow.

(Exposition on Psalm 76)

It's very easy to make false claims; much more difficult to prove them. Calvin excels at eloquent claims and flowery rhetoric. He does far less well

in documenting and *proving* his various claims. It's an elementary rule in debate: to not make sweeping negative statements (“*no one ever did so-and-so*”; “the fathers *never* taught thus-and-so”; “x is *always* the case in Scripture”; etc.).

The reason this is unwise is because it can so easily be shot down, even by one counter-example. The more counter-examples that can be produced, the sillier and more foolish the person looks who made the now-refuted negative claim. It is shown to be empty rhetoric. The person clearly didn't do his homework. The present instance is a classic example of this failing. Calvin certainly knew enough to know better.

And the very things which these worthy expounders pretend that Christ only counselled they uniformly declare, without any doubt, that he expressly enjoined. But as we have shown above, that this is a most pestilential error, let it suffice here to have briefly observed that monasticism, as it now exists, founded on an idea which all pious men ought to execrate—namely, the pretence that there is some more perfect rule of life than that common rule which God has delivered to the whole Church. Whatever is built on this foundation cannot but be abominable. (IV, 13:12)

Since the foundation is plainly, explicitly biblical, and strongly affirmed by the fathers, it is *Calvin's* foundation that is “abominable” and that must be discarded. He has amply refuted himself. Certainly many more relevant Bible passages could be brought to bear; for example, 1 Corinthians 12:31: “But earnestly desire the higher gifts.”

But they produce another argument for their perfection, and deem it invincible. Our Lord said to the young man who put a question to him concerning the perfection of righteousness, “If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor” (Mt. 19:21). Whether they do so, I do not now dispute. Let us grant for the present that they do. They boast, then, that they have become perfect by abandoning their all. If the sum off perfection consists in this, what is the meaning of Paul's doctrine, that though a man should give all his goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, he is nothing? (1 Cor. 13:3). (IV, 13:13)

Obviously our Lord presupposed that love would be present also. But that doesn't nullify the Lord's point to the rich young ruler. It merely expands it; so Calvin commits one of his many "either/or" fallacies. The rich young ruler passage, however, is only a partial analogy to the notion of the evangelical counsels. The better passages to bring to bear are 1 Corinthians 7 and Matthew 19.

These refer to voluntarily celibacy for the sake of the kingdom. That's a call above and beyond the ordinary, and a disproof of Calvin's denial of same, as are the many passages in St. Paul where the apostle describes his voluntary deprivations and sacrifices. It is a higher calling: a more perfected life. He even calls himself a "libation" (Phil 2:17) and refers to "my sufferings for your sake" (Col 1:24).

Paul's life was clearly not for everyone. Therefore, there is indeed such a thing as the counsels of perfection. It is utterly obvious that St. Paul was closer to it than Calvin or myself or most people who have not completely devoted themselves to the work of the kingdom. The early Christians owned everything in common; Jesus told His disciples to take very little with them when they went out evangelizing, etc.

I admit that this passage was ill understood by some of the Fathers; and hence arose an affectation of voluntary poverty, those only being thought blest who abandoned all earthly goods, and in a state of destitution devoted themselves to Christ. (IV, 13:13)

Didn't Paul pretty much do that? Didn't the disciples leave everything to follow Jesus? Why would anyone want to denigrate and "demote" such extraordinary devotion?

The thing itself declares that all who retire into monasteries withdraw from the Church. For how? Do they not separate themselves from the legitimate society of the faithful, by acquiring for themselves a special ministry and private administration of the sacraments? What is meant by destroying the communion of the Church if this is not? (IV, 13:14)

The Church (and the Bible) recognizes that different people in the Body of Christ have different callings and gifts (1 Corinthians 7:17; chapter 12). Therefore, if some feel called to be celibate and lead a life of prayer in relative isolation, that is not a withdrawal from the Church; rather, it is

serving the Church by concentrating on certain important elements of spirituality.

Protestants don't describe missionaries who go off into the wilds into a completely non-Christian environment a separation "from the legitimate society of the faithful"! Why should it be different with those who devote themselves to prayer? Of course, if prayer is derided as of no import, it might be different, but I don't think Calvin wishes to argue *that*.

Some of these "isolated" monks that Calvin is so alarmed about devoted their entire lives to copying biblical manuscripts, so that Calvin could even have a Bible at all to work with and from. Would he condemn *that*, too, because they were relatively isolated? I doubt it. Therefore, his objection collapses because of the absurdity of its consequences fully considered.

And to follow out the comparison with which I began, and at once close the point, what resemblance have they in this respect to the ancient monks? These, though they dwelt separately from others, had not a separate Church; they partook of the sacraments with others, they attended public meetings, and were then a part of the people. But what have those men done in erecting a private altar for themselves but broken the bond of unity? For they have excommunicated themselves from the whole body of the Church, and contemned the ordinary ministry by which the Lord has been pleased that peace and charity should be preserved among his followers. Wherefore I hold that as many monasteries as there are in the present day, so many conventicles are there of schismatics, who have disturbed ecclesiastical order, and been cut off from the legitimate society of the faithful. (IV, 13:14)

The desert or "hermit" monks in the tradition of St. Anthony were not "schismatics." Many notable figures among the fathers took this approach to spirituality:

Very many of them were saints. Doctors of the Church, like St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nazianzus, St. John Chrysostom, St. Jerome, belonged to their number; and we might also mention Sts. Epiphanius, Ephraem, Hilarion, Nilus, Isidore of Pelusium.

(*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, "Hermits")

Yet Calvin tries to contend that the tradition is not ancient. He is incorrect. The same article describes the various interpretations of “solitude”—there were hermits who were absolutely isolated, but the majority had some sort of community connection (at least in a monastic community). The Church had long since dealt with the question of the relation between the two. Calvin brings up nothing new.

And that there might be no doubt as to their separation, they have given themselves the various names of factions. They have not been ashamed to glory in that which Paul so execrates, that he is unable to express his detestation too strongly. Unless, indeed, we suppose that Christ was not divided by the Corinthians, when one teacher set himself above another (1 Cor. 1:12, 13; 3:4); and that now no injury is done to Christ when, instead of Christians, we hear some called Benedictines, others Franciscans, others Dominicans, and so called, that while they affect to be distinguished from the common body of Christians, they proudly substitute these names for a religious profession. (IV, 13:14)

Factions? Orders are not denominations. We all know where *that* difficulty is present. Calvinists, Lutherans, Anabaptists, Anglicans, Zwinglians ... and that is only within Calvin’s lifetime. It gets much worse after that.

Catholic orders are merely different methods of approaching the spiritual life: all legitimate. Where they do take different theological views, it is in areas of permissible disagreement, such as the relationship of reason and faith, or predestination and free will.

With Protestant denominations, on the other hand, massive doctrinal relativism and outright contradiction is inherent, and the early Protestants often anathematized each other. Luther thought Zwingli was damned, and vice versa, etc. Calvin once described Lutheranism as an “evil.”

A Protestant like Calvin bringing up schism and wrongly applying it to the monastic life is as ironic and amusing as a fish condemning the water that he lives in or a tiger coming out against a carnivorous diet or a lumberjack sawing off the limb he is sitting on.

It was a fine thing to cast away their substance, and free themselves from all worldly cares; but God sets more value on the pious

management of a household, when the head of it, discarding all avarice, ambition, and other lusts of the flesh, makes it his purpose to serve God in some particular vocation. It is fine to philosophise in seclusion, far away from the intercourse of society; but it ill accords with Christian meekness for any one, as if in hatred of the human race, to fly to the wilderness and to solitude, and at the same time desert the duties which the Lord has especially commanded. Were we to grant that there was nothing worse in that profession, there is certainly no small evil in its having introduced a useless and perilous example into the Church. (IV, 13:16)

By this foolish reasoning, Calvin also condemns John the Baptist, most of the prophets, and Protestant missionaries who go into strange heathen lands.

5. Public, Communal Fasting and Abstinence

Then the superstitious observance of Lent had everywhere prevailed: for both the vulgar imagined that they thereby perform some excellent service to God, and pastors commended it as a holy imitation of Christ; though it is plain that Christ did not fast to set an example to others, but, by thus commencing the preaching of the gospel, meant to prove that his doctrine was not of men, but had come from heaven. (IV, 12:20)

Here we have an annoyingly repetitious fallacy of Calvin. He extolls the essence of a thing that is fully Catholic (as later, in Part Two, we shall see in his thorough sanctioning of fasting and penitential practices *per se*). But then he goes on to denigrate the same thing when *Catholics* do it (in a certain form), by implying that when *they* do it, it is thoroughly corrupt and gutted of its essence and spiritual usefulness. In other words, the motives and acts of Catholics always have to be painted in the most unfavorable “superstitious” light.

And it is strange how men of acute judgment could fall into this gross delusion, which so many clear reasons refute: for Christ did not fast repeatedly (which he must have done had he meant to lay down a law for an anniversary fast), but once only, when preparing for the

promulgation of the gospel. Nor does he fast after the manner of men, as he would have done had he meant to invite men to imitation; he rather gives an example, by which he may raise all to admire rather than study to imitate him. (IV, 12:20)

But He specifically explained *why* this was. It doesn't support Calvin's argument at all:

Matthew 9:15 And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. (cf. Mk 2:19–20; Lk 5:34–35)

Jesus didn't regularly fast, because He was the *bridegroom*. But after He departed, He said that His disciples would fast. He did, however, observe all the Jewish feasts, and certainly some of them involved fasting.

In short, the nature of his fast is not different from that which Moses observed when he received the law at the hand of the Lord (Exod. 24:18; 34:28). For, seeing that that miracle was performed in Moses to establish the law, it behoved not to be omitted in Christ, lest the gospel should seem inferior to the law. But from that day, it never occurred to any one, under pretence of imitating Moses, to set up a similar form of fast among the Israelites. Nor did any of the holy prophets and fathers follow it, though they had inclination and zeal enough for all pious exercises; for though it is said of Elijah that he passed forty days without meat and drink (1 Kings 19:8), this was merely in order that the people might recognise that he was raised up to maintain the law, from which almost the whole of Israel had revolted. It was therefore merely false zeal, replete with superstition, which set up a fast under the title and pretext of imitating Christ; ... (IV, 12:20)

This is untrue. Earlier in this section (IV, 12:17), Calvin asked why Christians shouldn't imitate what was performed in the old covenant (particularly fasting). There is plenty of indication of communal fasting in the Old Testament:

Ezra 8:21, 23 Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Aha'va, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from him a straight

way for ourselves, our children, and all our goods.... So we fasted and besought our God for this, and he listened to our entreaty. (cf. 9:5)

Nehemiah 9:1 Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the people of Israel were assembled with fasting and in sackcloth, and with earth upon their heads.

Esther 4:3 And in every province, wherever the king's command and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting and weeping and lamenting, and most of them lay in sackcloth and ashes.

Esther 4:16 Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law; and if I perish, I perish.

Esther 9:31 that these days of Purim should be observed at their appointed seasons, as Mor'decai the Jew and Queen Esther enjoined upon the Jews, and as they had laid down for themselves and for their descendants, with regard to their fasts and their lamenting.

Jeremiah 36:9 In the fifth year of Jehoi'akim the son of Josi'ah, king of Judah, in the ninth month, all the people in Jerusalem and all the people who came from the cities of Judah to Jerusalem proclaimed a fast before the LORD.

Joel 1:14 Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly.... (cf. 2:15)

Zechariah 8:19 Thus says the LORD of hosts: The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah seasons of joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love truth and peace. (cf. 7:3, 5)

It's not required that we imitate Jesus' fast for forty days in every minute *particular*, but there are many analogies between His fast and Lent. Why that should be frowned upon by Calvin is a mystery. Moreover, St. Paul teaches a great deal about voluntary bodily suffering (eminently, his own)—not essentially different from fasting and abstinence—as a means to help save souls:

2 Corinthians 4:8–11 We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; [9] persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; [10] always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. [11] For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

Galatians 6:17 Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.

Philippians 2:17 Even if I am to be poured as a libation upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.

Philippians 3:10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,

Colossians 1:24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church,

2 Timothy 2:9–11 the gospel for which I am suffering and wearing fetters like a criminal. But the word of God is not fettered. [10] Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain salvation in Christ Jesus with its eternal glory. [11] The saying is sure: If we have died with him, we shall also live with him;

2 Timothy 4:6 For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come.

Note that St. Paul is “broadcasting” all of this in his epistles, so that he is not only *practicing* a rigid self-discipline of suffering specifically on behalf of others (Phil 2:17; Col 1:24; 2 Tim 2:10; 4:6 above), but specifically *making it known* as common knowledge, and, furthermore, urging his followers to *imitate* him, in these same contexts:

Philippians 3:17 Brethren, join in imitating me, and mark those who so live as you have an example in us.

Philippians 4:9–13 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace will be with you. [10] I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me; you were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. [11] Not that I complain of want; for I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content. [12] I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want. [13] I can do all things in him who strengthens me.

Therefore, public, communal fasting and other disciplinary, penitential practices are perfectly acceptable, since we have the model of the Apostle Paul himself (as he expressly states).

6. Holy Water

Should any one ask them where they get their holy water, they will at once answer,—from the apostles. As if I did not know who the Roman bishop is, to whom history ascribes the invention, and who, if he had admitted the apostles to his council, assuredly never would have adulterated baptism by a foreign and unseasonable symbol; although it does not seem probable to me that the origin of that consecration is so ancient as is there recorded. (IV, 10:20)

Scripture has more than sufficient indication that holy water is not foreign to the Christian, biblical worldview at all, and indeed, quite consistent with it. It refers to water that has been blessed (Ex 23:25), “holy water” (Numbers 5:17), “water for impurity” (Num 19:9, 13–20), “healed” (KJV), “purified” (NASB), or “wholesome” (RSV) water (2 Ki 2:19–22).

Water is spoken of as being connected to *cleansing* (Lev 14:8–9, 50–52, 15:5–27, 17:15; Num 8:7, 19:12, 18–19; 2 Ki 5:12; Ps 51:7; Ezek 16:4, 36:25; Eph 5:26; Heb 10:22), *purifying* (Ex 29:4, 40:12, 30–32; Lev 11:32, 16:4, 24, 26, 28, 22:6; Num 19:7–8, 31:23; Deut 23:10–11; 1 Ki 18:33–34; Jn 2:6; Heb 9:19), and *healing* (2 Ki 5:14; Is 35:5–7; Jn 5:4; 9:6–7).

7. Holy Days

... certain days, which he had vainly imagined to be more holy than other days. (IV, 13:7)

By analogy to the old covenant and early Christian adherence to its particulars, the Church has the prerogative to set mandatory holy days as well. Moreover, there is biblical evidence for the notion of a holy day. The most obvious is the Sabbath:

Exodus 16:23 he said to them, “This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy sabbath to the LORD ...

Exodus 20:8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy

Exodus 31:15 Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD (cf. 35:2; Lev 23:3; Deut 5:12–13; Neh 13:22; Is 58:13; Jer 17:22, 24, 27)

Leviticus 23:8 ... on the seventh day is a holy convocation ...

Additional days are described as especially “holy” too:

Leviticus 23:15–16, 21 “And you shall count from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven full weeks shall they be, [16] counting fifty days to the morrow after the seventh sabbath; then you shall present a cereal offering of new grain to the LORD.... [21] And you shall make proclamation on the same day; you shall hold a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work: it is a statute for ever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.

Leviticus 23:24–25 “Say to the people of Israel, In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a day of solemn rest, a memorial proclaimed with blast of trumpets, a holy convocation. [25] You shall do no laborious work; and you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD.”

Leviticus 23:27–28 “On the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement; it shall be for you a time of holy convocation, and you shall afflict yourselves and present an offering by fire to the LORD. [28]

And you shall do no work on this same day; for it is a day of atonement, to make atonement for you before the LORD your God.

Leviticus 23:33–37 And the LORD said to Moses, [34] “Say to the people of Israel, On the fifteenth day of this seventh month and for seven days is the feast of booths to the LORD. [35] On the first day shall be a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work. [36] Seven days you shall present offerings by fire to the LORD; on the eighth day you shall hold a holy convocation and present an offering by fire to the LORD; it is a solemn assembly; you shall do no laborious work. [37] “These are the appointed feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim as times of holy convocation, for presenting to the LORD offerings by fire, burnt offerings and cereal offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, each on its proper day;

Leviticus 23:39–41 “On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall keep the feast of the LORD seven days; on the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest. [40] And you shall take on the first day the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days. [41] You shall keep it as a feast to the LORD seven days in the year; it is a statute for ever throughout your generations; you shall keep it in the seventh month. (cf. Num 28:18, 25–26; 29:1, 7, 12)

Nehemiah 8:9–11 And Nehemi’ah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, “This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep.” For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. [10] Then he said to them, “Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord; and do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.” [11] So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, “Be quiet, for this day is holy; do not be grieved.”

Nehemiah 10:31 and if the peoples of the land bring in wares or any grain on the sabbath day to sell, we will not buy from them on the

sabbath or on a holy day; and we will forego the crops of the seventh year and the exaction of every debt.

2 Maccabees 6:11 Others who had assembled in the caves near by, to observe the seventh day secretly, were betrayed to Philip and were all burned together, because their piety kept them from defending themselves, in view of their regard for that most holy day.

The early Christians observed the Jewish feasts (e.g., Jn 4:45; 5:1; 7:1–2, 11, 37; 12:20), including Passover (Matthew 26:17–19; Mk 14:12–16; Lk 22:1–15; Jn 2:13, 23). The Last Supper was a Passover ceremony. Therefore, the explicit Old Testament evidence for holy days was carried over into the new covenant, with the express sanction (by their own practice) of our Lord Jesus and St. Paul. Also, the “Lord’s day” (Rev 1:10) implies a greater holiness, akin to the Sabbath.

8. The Sacraments: Basic Definitions and Disputes

Akin to the preaching of the gospel, we have another help to our faith in the sacraments, in regard to which, it greatly concerns us that some sure doctrine should be delivered, informing us both of the end for which they were instituted, and of their present use. First, we must attend to what a sacrament is. It seems to me, then, a simple and appropriate definition to say, that it is an external sign, by which the Lord seals on our consciences his promises of good-will toward us, in order to sustain the weakness of our faith, and we in our turn testify our piety towards him, both before himself, and before angels as well as men. We may also define more briefly by calling it a testimony of the divine favour toward us, confirmed by an external sign, with a corresponding attestation of our faith towards Him. (IV, 14:1)

[T]he term was applied to those signs which gave an august representation of things spiritual and sublime. (IV, 14:2)

From the definition which we have given, we perceive that there never is a sacrament without an antecedent promise, the sacrament being added as a kind of appendix, with the view of confirming and sealing the

promise, and giving a better attestation, or rather, in a manner, confirming it. (IV, 14:3)

This is commonly expressed by saying that a sacrament consists of the word and the external sign. By the word we ought to understand not one which, muttered without meaning and without faith, by its sound merely, as by a magical incantation, has the effect of consecrating the element, but one which, preached, makes us understand what the visible sign means. (IV, 14:4)

But sacraments bring with them the clearest promises, and, when compared with the word, have this peculiarity, that they represent promises to the life, as if painted in a picture. (IV, 14:5)

Sacraments, therefore, are exercises which confirm our faith in the word of God ... (IV, 14:6)

We conclude, therefore, that the sacraments are truly termed evidences of divine grace, and, as it were, seals of the good-will which he entertains toward us. They, by sealing it to us, sustain, nourish, confirm, and increase our faith. (IV, 14:7)

I think I have shown by arguments abundantly plain, that all which ancient writers intended was to intimate, that sacraments are the signs of sacred and spiritual things. (IV, 14:13)

On the other hand, it is to be observed, that as these objectors impair the force, and altogether overthrow the use of the sacraments, so there are others who ascribe to the sacraments a kind of secret virtue, which is nowhere said to have been implanted in them by God. By this error the more simple and unwary are perilously deceived, while they are taught to seek the gifts of God where they cannot possibly be found, and are insensibly withdrawn from God, so as to embrace instead of his truth mere vanity. For the schools of the Sophists have taught with general consent that the sacraments of the new law, in other words, those now in use in the Christian Church, justify, and confer grace, provided only that we do not interpose the obstacle of mortal sin. It is impossible to describe how fatal and pestilential this sentiment is, ... (IV, 14:14)

The term sacrament, in the view we have hitherto taken of it, includes, generally, all the signs which God ever commanded men to use, that he might make them sure and confident of the truth of his promises. (IV, 14:18)

But since, as has been said above, they are testimonies of grace and salvation from the Lord, ... (IV, 14:19)

Still the ancient sacraments had the same end in view as our own.—viz. to direct and almost lead us by the hand to Christ, or rather, were like images to represent him and hold him forth to our knowledge. But as we have already shown that sacraments are a kind of seals of the promises of God, ... (IV, 14:20)

For Baptism testifies that we are washed and purified; the Supper of the Eucharist that we are redeemed. (IV, 14:22)

Whatever, therefore, is now exhibited to us in the sacraments, the Jews formerly received in theirs—viz. Christ, with his spiritual riches. The same efficacy which ours possess they experienced in theirs—viz. that they were seals of the divine favour toward them in regard to the hope of eternal salvation. (IV, 14:23)

A sacrament is a seal of attestation or promise of God. (IV, 19:2)

Sacraments are indeed signs, but not *only* signs, with no further effect. Calvin has retained half of the traditional Christian definition and discarded the other equally important aspect. But a half-truth is little better than an untruth. He wants to make this an abstract and non-“transactional” process. But on what basis does he do so? As so often, Calvin’s rationale seems arbitrary. Where is the precedent? Who else thought this way?

He attempts to co-opt St. Augustine, but he ignores the “realist” aspect of St. Augustine’s sacramentalism. St. Augustine referred to the “signs” aspect without denying the realism. He accepted all seven Catholic sacraments. Calvin reduces the sacraments to two, and redefines even those, so that there is no longer any regeneration in baptism, nor real, substantial presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist (things that even Luther retained). Calvin takes out the heart of the sacraments: the fact

that they convey grace in order to bring about sanctification of the recipient. Hence, St. Thomas Aquinas wrote:

[A] sacrament properly speaking is that which is ordained to signify our sanctification. In which three things may be considered; viz. the very cause of our sanctification, which is Christ's passion; the form of our sanctification, which is grace and the virtues; and the ultimate end of our sanctification, which is eternal life. And all these are signified by the sacraments. Consequently a sacrament is a sign that is both a reminder of the past, i.e. the passion of Christ; and an indication of that which is effected in us by Christ's passion, i.e. grace; and a prognostic, that is, a foretelling of future glory.... Since a sacrament signifies that which sanctifies, it must needs signify the effect, which is implied in the sanctifying cause as such.

(*Summa Theologica*, III, 60, 3)

Catholic theologian Ludwig Ott further explains:

The Sacraments are neither purely natural signs ... nor purely artificial or conventional signs, as according to their inner composition, they are appropriate for vividly depicting inward grace. They are not merely speculative or theoretical signs, but efficacious or practical signs, as they not only indicate the inner sanctification, but also effect it ... The Reformers, by reason of their doctrine of justification, see in the sacraments pledges of the Divine Promise of the forgiveness of sins by means of the awakening and strengthening of fiducial faith, which alone justifies. Thus, the sacraments are not means whereby grace is conferred, but means whereby faith and its consequences are stirred into action.... Thus the Sacraments have only a psychological and symbolic significance. The Council of Trent rejected this teaching as a heresy.

(*Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, translated by Patrick Lynch, edited by James Canon Bastible, 4th edition, Rockford, Illinois: TAN Books, 1974 [first published in German in 1952], 326–327)

For, as Chrysostom says (Hom. 60, ad Popul.). "Were we incorporeal, he would give us these things in a naked and incorporeal form. Now

because our souls are implanted in bodies, he delivers spiritual things under things visible. Not that the qualities which are set before us in the sacraments are inherent in the nature of the things, but God gives them this signification.” (IV, 14:3)

But the same Chrysostom believed just as St. Augustine did, and thus is no witness to Calvin’s dissenting doctrine:

Further, because he said, “a communion of the Body,” and that which communicates is another thing from that whereof it communicates; even this which seemeth to be but a small difference, he took away. For having said, “a communion of the Body,” he sought again to express something nearer. Wherefore also he added, Ver. 17. “For we, who are many, are one bread, one body.” “For why speak I of communion?” saith he, “we are that self-same body.” For what is the bread? The Body of Christ. And what do they become who partake of it? The Body of Christ: not many bodies, but one body. For as the bread consisting of many grains is made one, so that the grains no where appear; they exist indeed, but their difference is not seen by reason of their conjunction; so are we conjoined both with each other and with Christ: there not being one body for thee, and another for thy neighbor to be nourished by, but the very same for all. Wherefore also he adds, “For we all partake of the one bread.” ... For he gave not simply even His own body; but because the former nature of the flesh which was framed out of earth, had first become deadened by sin and destitute of life; He brought in, as one may say, another sort of dough and leaven, His own flesh, by nature indeed the same, but free from sin and full of life; and gave to all to partake thereof, that being nourished by this and laying aside the old dead material, we might be blended together unto that which is living and eternal, by means of this table.

(Homily XXIV on First Corinthians, 4; NPNF 1, Vol. XII)

[N]o one can enter into the kingdom of heaven except he be regenerated through water and the Spirit, and he who does not eat the flesh of the Lord and drink his blood is excluded from eternal life, and if all these things are accomplished only by means of those holy hands, I mean the hands of the priest, how will any one, without these, be able to

escape the fire of hell, or to win those crowns which are reserved for the victorious? These [priests] truly are they who are entrusted with the pangs of spiritual travail and the birth which comes through baptism: by their means we put on Christ, and are buried with the Son of God, and become members of that blessed head ...

(*The Priesthood* 3:5–6 [A.D. 387])

The evidence is overwhelming: the fathers believed in the real, substantial, physical presence of Christ in the Eucharist, as many Protestant patristic scholars amply confirm. They believed in eucharistic adoration, and the sacrifice of the mass. The fathers also believed *en masse* in baptismal regeneration. They are united in these matters as much as they are on virtually any doctrine of theology. Respected Protestant Church historian J. N. D. Kelly writes:

It was always held to convey the remission of sins ... the theory that it mediated the Holy Spirit was fairly general ... The early view, therefore, like the Pauline, would seem to be that baptism itself is the vehicle for conveying the Spirit to believers; in all this period we nowhere come across any clear pointers to the existence of a separate rite, such as unction or the laying on of hands, appropriated to this purpose.

(*Early Christian Doctrines*, San Francisco: Harper Collins, revised edition, 1978, 194–195)

[I]n deriving a cause of righteousness from the sacraments, it entangles miserable minds, already of their own accord too much inclined to the earth, in a superstitious idea, which makes them acquiesce in the spectacle of a corporeal object rather than in God himself. I wish we had not such experience of both evils as to make it altogether unnecessary to give a lengthened proof of them. For what is a sacrament received without faith, but most certain destruction to the Church? For, seeing that nothing is to be expected beyond the promise, and the promise no less denounces wrath to the unbeliever than offers grace to the believer, it is an error to suppose that anything more is conferred by the sacraments than is offered by the word of God, and obtained by true faith. (IV, 14:14)

That doesn't follow. It's not idolatry to accept God's revealed method of distributing His grace through physical objects. The incarnation itself did *that*. God could have remained purely a spirit and nothing else, and could have avoided the messiness of the crucifixion. But it was the incarnation (a physical thing, not totally "spirit") that made salvation possible in the first place.

Therefore, it is beyond absurd to deny that God could use physical matter to spread His grace, given the huge factor of the incarnation itself. It's an "anti-incarnational" strain of thought.

From this another thing follows—viz. that assurance of salvation does not depend on participation in the sacraments, as if justification consisted in it. This, which is treasured up in Christ alone, we know to be communicated, not less by the preaching of the Gospel than by the seal of the sacrament, and may be completely enjoyed without this seal. (IV, 14:14)

How odd, then, that Jesus said that whoever didn't eat His flesh and drink His blood could not be saved. How strange that Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). How weird that St. Paul would teach: "he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

But why obtrude antiquity, seeing that ancient writers, whenever they would speak precisely, nowhere mention more than two sacraments? (IV, 19:12)

This is an extraordinary claim, since it is easily refuted. St. Augustine does this himself (if we must get legalistic about use of the actual word "sacrament"):

[T]here remains in the ordained persons the Sacrament of Ordination; and if, for any fault, any be removed from his office, he will not be without the Sacrament of the Lord once for all set upon him, albeit continuing unto condemnation.

(*On the Good of Marriage*, 24:32 [A.D. 401])

He uses the word also of holy matrimony:

Undoubtedly the substance of the sacrament is of this bond, so that when man and woman have been joined in marriage they must continue inseparably as long as they live, ...

(*Marriage and Concupiscence* 1:10:11 [A.D. 419])

In marriage, however, let the blessings of marriage be loved: offspring, fidelity, and the sacramental bond.... The sacramental bond, which they lose neither through separation nor through adultery, this the spouses should guard chastely and harmoniously.

(*Ibid.*, 1:17:19)

9. Catholic Sacramental Principle of *Ex Opere Operato*

[A] sacrament is so separated from the reality by the unworthiness of the partaker, that nothing remains but an empty and useless figure. Now, in order that you may have not a sign devoid of truth, but the thing with the sign, the Word which is included in it must be apprehended by faith. Thus, in so far as by means of the sacraments you will profit in the communion of Christ, will you derive advantage from them. (IV, 14:15)

We must not suppose that there is some latent virtue inherent in the sacraments by which they, in themselves, confer the gifts of the Holy Spirit upon us, in the same way in which wine is drunk out of a cup, since the only office divinely assigned them is to attest and ratify the benevolence of the Lord towards us; and they avail no farther than accompanied by the Holy Spirit to open our minds and hearts, and make us capable of receiving this testimony, in which various distinguished graces are clearly manifested. For the sacraments, as we lately observed (chap. 13 sec. 6; and 14 sec. 6, 7), are to us what messengers of good news are to men, or earnestness in ratifying pactions. They do not of themselves bestow any grace, but they announce and manifest it, and, like earnestness and badges, give a ratification of the gifts which the divine liberality has bestowed upon us.... Meanwhile, we get rid of that fiction by which the cause of justification and the power of

the Holy Spirit are included in elements as vessels and vehicles, ... (IV, 14:17)

It is here proper to remind the reader, that all the trifling talk of the sophists concerning the *opus operatum*, is not only false. but repugnant to the very nature of sacraments, which God appointed in order that believers, who are void and in want of all good, might bring nothing of their own, but simply beg. Hence it follows, that in receiving them they do nothing which deserves praise, and that in this action (which in respect of them is merely passive) no work can be ascribed to them. (IV, 14:26)

For this analogy or similitude furnishes the surest rule in the sacraments—viz. that in corporeal things we are to see spiritual, just as if they were actually exhibited to our eye, since the Lord has been pleased to represent them by such figures; not that such graces are included and bound in the sacrament, so as to be conferred by its efficacy, but only that by this badge the Lord declares to us that he is pleased to bestow all these things upon us. (IV, 15:14)

Calvin, as is his wont, goes too far and denies an underlying Catholic principle: *ex opere operato*: the notion that the sacraments have inherent power and have effect precisely because God's power is in them. Catholics agree that the *benefits* of the sacrament can vary, according to inner disposition, but in a way that doesn't deny *ex opere operato*. Calvin puts relatively more emphasis on the recipient rather than the Lord of the sacraments, Who uses them to accomplish His purposes. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* asserts the proper, balanced view:

1127 Celebrated worthily in faith, the sacraments confer the grace that they signify. They are *efficacious* because in them Christ himself is at work: it is he who baptizes, he who acts in his sacraments in order to communicate the grace that each sacrament signifies. The Father always hears the prayer of his Son's Church which, in the epiclesis of each sacrament, expresses her faith in the power of the Spirit. As fire transforms into itself everything it touches, so the Holy Spirit transforms into the divine life whatever is subjected to his power.

1128 This is the meaning of the Church's affirmation that the sacraments act *ex opere operato* (literally: "by the very fact of the action's being performed"), i.e., by virtue of the saving work of Christ, accomplished once for all. It follows that "the sacrament is not wrought by the righteousness of either the celebrant or the recipient, but by the power of God." [footnote: St. Thomas Aquinas, *S Th*, III, 68, 8] From the moment that a sacrament is celebrated in accordance with the intention of the Church, the power of Christ and his Spirit acts in and through it, independently of the personal holiness of the minister. Nevertheless, the fruits of the sacraments also depend on the disposition of the one who receives them.

1129 The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are *necessary for salvation*. "Sacramental grace" is the grace of the Holy Spirit, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament. The Spirit heals and transforms those who receive him by conforming them to the Son of God. The fruit of the sacramental life is that the Spirit of adoption makes the faithful partakers in the divine nature [footnote: cf. 2 Peter 1:4] by uniting them in a living union with the only Son, the Savior.

St. Augustine (virtually Calvin's chosen "patron saint") accepted *ex opere operato*. For example, he wrote:

Baptism consists not in the merits of those by whom it is administered, nor of those to whom it is administered, but in its own sanctity and truth, on account of Him who instituted it.

(*Cont. Cres.*, IV)

Whence this great power of water, that it touches the body and cleanses the soul?

(Tractate 80 on the Gospel of John)

Elsewhere, Calvin explicitly rejects *ex opere operato*, and in so doing, shows that he scarcely even understands what it is that he rejects:

To show more fully the agreement between the doctrine of the Papists and that which Paul opposes, it must be observed, that the sacraments,

when we partake of them in a sincere manner, are not the works of men, but of God. In baptism or the Lord's supper, we do nothing but present ourselves to God, in order to receive his grace. Baptism, viewed in regard to us, is a passive work: we bring nothing to it but faith; and all that belongs to it is laid up in Christ. But what are the views of the Papists? They contrive the *opus operatum*, by which men merit the grace of God; and what is this, but to extinguish utterly the truth of the sacrament?

(*Commentary on Galatians*, 5:1–6, section 3; translated by John King: 1850)

The excellent *Catholic Encyclopedia* article on sacraments describes Calvin's and Protestantism's errors in this regard and presents the Catholic alternative:

Luther and his early followers rejected this conception of the sacraments. They do not cause grace, but are merely "signs and testimonies of God's good will towards us" (Augsburg Confessions); they excite faith, and faith (fiduciary) causes justification. Calvinists and Presbyterians hold substantially the same doctrine. Zwinglius lowered still further the dignity of the sacraments, making them signs not of God's fidelity but of our fidelity. By receiving the sacraments we manifest faith in Christ: they are merely the badges of our profession and the pledges of our fidelity.

Fundamentally all these errors arise from Luther's newly-invented theory of righteousness, i.e. the doctrine of justification by faith alone (see GRACE). If man is to be sanctified not by an interior renovation through grace which will blot out his sins, but by an extrinsic imputation through the merits of Christ, which will cover his soul as a cloak, there is no place for signs that cause grace, and those used can have no other purpose than to excite faith in the Saviour....

Against all innovators the Council of Trent declared: "If anyone say that the sacraments of the New Law do not contain the grace which they signify, or that they do not confer grace on those who place no obstacle to the same, let him be anathema" (Sess. viii, can. vi). "If anyone say that grace is not conferred by the sacraments *ex opere operato* but

that faith in God's promises is alone sufficient for obtaining grace, let him be anathema" (ibid., can. viii; cf. can. iv, v, vii).

The phrase "ex opere operato", for which there is no equivalent in English, probably was used for the first time by Peter of Poitiers (d. 1205), and afterwards by Innocent III (d. 1216; de myst. missae, III, v), and by St. Thomas (d. 1274; IV Sent., dist. 1, Q.i, a.5). It was happily invented to express a truth that had always been taught and had been introduced without objection.... "Ex opere operato", i.e. by virtue of the action, means that the efficacy of the action of the sacraments does not depend on anything human, but solely on the will of God as expressed by Christ's institution and promise.

"Ex opere operantis", i.e. by reason of the agent, would mean that the action of the sacraments depended on the worthiness either of the minister or of the recipient ... It is well known that Catholics teach that the sacraments are only the instrumental, not the principal, causes of grace. Neither can it be claimed that the phrase adopted by the council does away with all dispositions necessary on the part of the recipient, the sacraments acting like infallible charms causing grace in those who are ill-disposed or in grievous sin. The fathers of the council were careful to note that there must be no obstacle to grace on the part of the recipients, who must receive them *rite*, i.e. rightly and worthily; and they declare it a calumny to assert that they require no previous dispositions (Sess. XIV, de poenit., cap.4).

Dispositions are required to prepare the subject, but they are a condition (*conditio sine qua non*), not the causes, of the grace conferred. In this case the sacraments differ from the sacramentals, which may cause grace *ex opere operantis*, i.e. by reason of the prayers of the Church or the good, pious sentiments of those who use them.

In other statements, however, Calvin seems to back off from a total rejection of *ex opere operato* (as with Luther, self-contradiction is always a possibility):

Therefore, you will ask, Do the wicked, by their ingratitude, make the ordinance of God fruitless and void? I answer, that what I have said is not to be understood as if the power and truth of the sacrament depended on the condition or pleasure of him who receives it. That

which God instituted continues firm, and retains its nature, however men may vary; but since it is one thing to offer, and another to receive, there is nothing to prevent a symbol, consecrated by the word of the Lord, from being truly what it is said to be, and preserving its power, though it may at the same time confer no benefit on the wicked and ungodly. (IV, 14:16)

Moreover, if we have rightly determined that a sacrament is not to be estimated by the hand of him by whom it is administered, but is to be received as from the hand of God himself, from whom it undoubtedly proceeded, we may hence infer that its dignity neither gains nor loses by the administrator. And, just as among men, when a letter has been sent, if the hand and seal is recognised, it is not of the least consequence who or what the messenger was; so it ought to be sufficient for us to recognise the hand and seal of our Lord in his sacraments, let the administrator be who he may. This confutes the error of the Donatists, who measured the efficacy and worth of the sacrament by the dignity of the minister. (IV, 15:16)

10. Baptism: Sign and Seal Only, or Regeneration?

The first object, therefore, for which it is appointed by the Lord, is to be a sign and evidence of our purification, ... (IV, 15:1)

For he did not mean to intimate that our ablution and salvation are perfected by water, or that water possesses in itself the virtue of purifying, regenerating, and renewing; nor does he mean that it is the cause of salvation, but only that the knowledge and certainty of such gifts are perceived in this sacrament. This the words themselves evidently show. For Paul connects together the word of life and baptism of water, as if he had said, by the gospel the message of our ablution and sanctification is announced; by baptism this message is sealed. (IV, 15:2)

How much evil has been caused by the dogma, ill expounded, that baptism is necessary to salvation, few perceive, ... (IV, 15:20)

Paul repeatedly taught baptismal regeneration:

Romans 6:3–4 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? [4] We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

Galatians 3:26–27 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. [27] For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Ephesians 5:26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

Titus 3:5 he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit,

The same Paul gave the following account of what was said when he himself was baptized. He obviously thought that baptism washed away sins; i.e., regenerated:

Acts 22:16 And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name.

Other passages concur:

Mark 16:16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved ... [disputed biblical manuscript, but still indicative of apostolic belief]

Acts 2:38, 40 And Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.... [40] And he testified with many other words and exhorted them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.”

If Calvin can't accept the plain words of perspicuous Holy Scripture in order to derive his doctrine, and since it is not agreeable to his taste and preferences in the matter of sacraments, perhaps he should start *rewriting* it? He keeps repeating that sacraments are signs or “testimonies” of things already accomplished rather than instruments of these same things.

If that is the case, then we must modify the following passages (Thomas Jefferson-style) so that they are squared with his “signs” approach, since in Scripture, a sacrament is specifically said to be the *cause* of the thing (i.e., salvation and/or remission of sins), not a mere *sign* of the thing *already* present. Fortunately, we have the *Revised Calvin Version* (RCV) of the Bible for this purpose:

Mark 16:16 (RC1V) He who believes and is baptized shows that he is already saved ...

Acts 2:38, 40 (RC2V) And Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, in order to show forth a seal of the already existing forgiveness of your sins; and your prior gift of the Holy Spirit.... [40] And he testified with many other words and exhorted them, saying, “Give sign and testimony by baptism that you have already saved yourselves from this crooked generation.”

Acts 22:16 (RC3V) And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized, and receive the sign and seal of the fact that God already washed away your sins, calling on his name.

Romans 6:4 (RC4V) We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too signify that we already walk in newness of life, which is why we are being baptized.

Galatians 3:27 (RC5V) For as many of you as were baptized into Christ as a seal to prove that you put on Christ before you were baptized.

Titus 3:5 (RC6V) he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, and not by the washing of regeneration, but by the renewal in the Holy Spirit,

Another example was, when he gave the bow in the cloud to Noah and his posterity, as a memorial that he would not again destroy the earth by a flood. These were to Adam and Noah as sacraments: not that the tree could give Adam and Eve the immortality which it could not give to itself; or the bow (which is only a reflection of the solar rays on the opposite clouds) could have the effect of confining the waters; but they

had a mark engraven on them by the word of God, to be proofs and seals of his covenant. The tree was previously a tree, and the bow a bow; but when they were inscribed with the word of God, a new form was given to them: they began to be what they previously were not. Lest any one suppose that these things were said in vain, the bow is even in the present day a witness to us of the covenant which God made with Noah ... (IV, 14:18)

Note how St. Peter draws a deliberate analogy from the physically saving of Noah and his family “by water” and the spiritual saving (regeneration) of the baptized:

1 Peter 3:20–21 who formerly did not obey, when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. [21] Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

This is how the Old Testament word pictures and events are often portrayed in the New Testament: they illustrated physical salvation or deliverance (such as being saved from a fire or flood or battlefield), whereas the new covenant emphasizes spiritual salvation and eternal life: and in this case, by the direct instrumentality of the sacrament. But according to Calvin’s belief, the passage should have read:

1 Peter 3:21 (RC7V) Baptism, which corresponds to this, now proves that you are already saved, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as a seal and an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

Nay, the only purification which baptism promises is by means of the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, who is figured by water from the resemblance to cleansing and washing. Who, then, can say that we are cleansed by that water which certainly attests that the blood of Christ is our true and only laver? (IV, 15:2)

Jesus, Paul, and Peter would say so, for three. The power of baptism stems, of course, from the cross. But the two aren’t mutually exclusive.

Baptism has the power to regenerate. Sacraments aren't contrary to Jesus' work on our behalf, which alone gives them their power and efficacy.

So that we cannot have a better argument to refute the hallucination of those who ascribe the whole to the virtue of water than we derive from the very meaning of baptism, which leads us away as well from the visible element which is presented to our eye, as from all other means, that it may fix our minds on Christ alone. (IV, 15:2)

It is fixing our mind on Christ when we believe in a sacrament that He Himself set up and commanded. How is that separate from Christ? It is only in Calvin's fallacious "either/or" mentality, which pits things against each other that don't have to be so opposed at all.

Regeneration we obtain from his death and resurrection only, when sanctified by his Spirit we are imbued with a new and spiritual nature. (IV, 15:6)

Of course it is from the work of Christ, but that doesn't mean that baptism cannot be the mediatory or sacramental *instrument* that God uses to bring about regeneration. The two are not mutually exclusive.

Wherefore we obtain, and in a manner distinctly perceive, in the Father the cause, in the Son the matter, and in the Spirit the effect of our purification and regeneration. Thus first John baptised, and thus afterwards the apostles by the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, understanding by the term *repentance*, regeneration, and by the *remission* of sins, ablution. (IV, 15:6)

Repentance is not yet regeneration. Calvin collapses the two terms into one, but they are not the same.

The things which we have said, both of mortification and ablution, were adumbrated among the people of Israel, who, for that reason, are described by the apostle as having been baptised in the cloud and in the sea (1 Cor. 10:2). Mortification was figured when the Lord, vindicating them from the hand of Pharaoh and from cruel bondage, paved a way for them through the Red Sea, and drowned Pharaoh himself and their Egyptian foes, who were pressing close behind, and threatening them

with destruction. For in this way also he promises us in baptism, and shows by a given sign that we are led by his might, and delivered from the captivity of Egypt, that is, from the bondage of sin, that our Pharaoh is drowned; in other words, the devil, although he ceases not to try and harass us. But as that Egyptian was not plunged into the depth of the sea, but cast out upon the shore, still alarmed the Israelites by the terror of his look, though he could not hurt them, so our enemy still threatens, shows his arms and is felt, but cannot conquer. The cloud was a symbol of purification (Num. 9:18). For as the Lord then covered them by an opposite cloud, and kept them cool, that they might not faint or pine away under the burning rays of the sun; so in baptism we perceive that we are covered and protected by the blood of Christ, lest the wrath of God, which is truly an intolerable flame, should lie upon us. Although the mystery was then obscure, and known to few, yet as there is no other method of obtaining salvation than in those two graces, God was pleased that the ancient fathers, whom he had adopted as heirs, should be furnished with both badges. (IV, 15:9)

Calvin's analogy fails, since not all of the Israelites who were saved from the Egyptians via the dividing and closing of the Red Sea were physically saved in the long run. Deliverance from physical death is the analogy in play. It is analogous to salvation, or the deliverance from eternal death and hell. This kind of "physical as a metaphor of spiritual" analogy is brought out clearly in 1 Peter 3:20b–21a:

... the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. [21] Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you ...

Therefore, if salvation is once for all, based on baptism, as Calvin argues, then following the analogy, the Jews saved from the Egyptians by the metaphor of baptism (water of the Red Sea) could not have later been judged by God and prohibited from the promised land (itself a sort of metaphor for heaven). But we know that this is not the case.

Far from saving the wandering Jews till the end (the promised land), God judged many of them as a result of the rebellion of Korah (Num 16:19–35). Not only were they killed by God, but they appear to be damned as well. Indeed, in the end, only Caleb and Joshua, of the original

Hebrews from the Exodus, entered the Holy Land (Numbers 14:30). Even Moses was forbidden to do so. God judged all of them (Num 14:21–35).

This is hardly consistent (by symbolic analogy) with Calvin's fiction that baptism is a guarantee of eschatological salvation, regardless of any personal sin afterward. The exact *opposite* is the case.

It will, perhaps, be objected, Why did Ananias say to Paul that he washed away his sins by baptism (Acts 22:16), if sins are not washed away by the power of baptism? I answer, we are said to receive, procure, and obtain, whatever according to the perception of our faith is exhibited to us by the Lord, whether he then attests it for the first time, or gives additional confirmation to what he had previously attested. All then that Ananias meant to say was, Be baptised, Paul, that you may be assured that your sins are forgiven you. In baptism, the Lord promises forgiveness of sins: receive it, and be secure. (IV, 15:15)

Note how Calvin (rather astonishingly) wishes to deny the plain import of St. Paul's clear-as-day words in Acts 22:16. This is what might be called obfuscation or obscurantism (also, *eisegesis*: reading into Scripture what is not there: one's own prior notions). Ananias "*meant*" to say so-and-so. Calvin treats Acts 2:38 (another classic baptismal regeneration passage) in the same fashion. In his commentaries he states:

Although in the text and order of the words, baptism doth here go before remission of sins, yet doth it follow it in order, because it is nothing else but a sealing of those good things which we have by Christ that they may be established in our consciences; therefore, after that Peter had intreated of repentance, he calleth the Jews unto the hope of grace and salvation; and, therefore, Luke well afterwards, in Paul's sermon, joineth faith and repentance together in the same sense, wherein he putteth forgiveness of sins in this place, and that for good considerations; for the hope of salvation consisteth in the free imputation of righteousness; and we are counted just, freely before God, when he forgiveth us our sins. The practice which has been in use for many ages, and even almost from the very commencement of the Church, for laics to baptise, in danger of death, when a minister could

not be present in time, cannot, it appears to me, be defended on sufficient grounds. (IV, 15:20)

Note Calvin's disdain for tradition and constant practice, even if it is from (by his own admission) "the very commencement of the Church." That is of no import to him whatever. He disagrees with the practice, and cares not a whit whether it was widely practiced in all ages. This is, of course, classic Protestant private judgment and partial rejection of the corporate and historical nature of Christianity, as well as the intrinsic part that tradition plays in it.

The example of Zipporah (Exod. 4:25) is irrelevantly quoted. Because the angel of God was appeased after she took a stone and circumcised her son, it is erroneously inferred that her act was approved by God. (IV, 15:22)

Calvin himself, in his commentary on Exodus 4, holds that Moses was negligent in not circumcising his son. Yet he also thinks that Zipporah was wrong to have done so, and that God didn't approve; therefore, he thinks that by analogy, no one (especially a woman) can baptize in extreme circumstances. We don't have much at all in the Bible about this, but what we do know is certainly not *inconsistent* with the Catholic argument by analogy for emergency baptism.

All we know is that "the LORD met him and sought to kill" Moses (Ex 4:24). Zipporah performed the circumcision (Ex 4:25) and then we are informed: "So he let him [Moses] alone" (Ex 4:26). One doesn't derive an overwhelming sense from this scanty information that God *disapproved*. It seems to me that it is more likely from what we know, that God *did* rather than did not approve. At the very least, if He didn't approve, it seems plausible to think that it would be mentioned in the text that He was angry at Zipporah. But it does not. So the Catholic argument by analogy is at the very least, equally as plausible as Calvin's denial that God was pleased by the act.

Another passage which they adduce is from the third chapter of John, where our Saviour's words seem to them to imply that a present regeneration is required in baptism, "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

See, they say, how baptism is termed regeneration by the lips of our Lord himself, and on what pretext, therefore, with what consistency is baptism given to those who, it is perfectly obvious, are not at all capable of regeneration? First, they are in error in imagining that there is any mention of baptism in this passage, merely because the word water is used. Nicodemus, after our Saviour had explained to him the corruption of nature, and the necessity of being born again, kept dreaming of a corporeal birth, and hence our Saviour intimates the mode in which God regenerates us—viz. by water and the Spirit; in other words, by the Spirit, who, in irrigating and cleansing the souls of believers, operates in the manner of water. By “water and the Spirit,” therefore, I simply understand the Spirit, which is water. Nor is the expression new. It perfectly accords with that which is used in the third chapter of Matthew, “He that cometh after me is mightier than I;” “he shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire” (Mt. 3:11). Therefore, as to baptise with the Holy Spirit, and with fire, is to confer the Holy Spirit, who, in regeneration, has the office and nature of fire, so to be born again of water, and of the Spirit, is nothing else than to receive that power of the Spirit, which has the same effect on the soul that water has on the body. I know that a different interpretation is given, but I have no doubt that this is the genuine meaning, because our Saviour’s only purpose was to teach, that all who aspire to the kingdom of heaven must lay aside their own disposition. And yet were we disposed to imitate these men in their mode of cavilling, we might easily, after conceding what they wish, reply to them, that baptism is prior to faith and repentance, since, in this passage, our Saviour mentions it before the Spirit. This certainly must be understood of spiritual gifts, and if they follow baptism, I have gained all I contend for. But, cavilling aside, the simple interpretation to be adopted is that which I have given—viz. that no man, until renewed by living water, that is, by the Spirit, can enter the kingdom of God. (IV, 16:25)

Here, Calvin is dead wrong. Ironically, even his opponents recognize that Jesus clearly refers to baptismal regeneration in His discussion with Nicodemus. Hence, we have the position of Churches of Christ and

Disciples of Christ, who hold to adult baptism and also baptismal regeneration: a sort of curious mix of Anabaptism and Catholicism.

Calvin attempts to escape this argument by denying that John 3:5 has to do with baptism at all. He makes it metaphorical. But John 3:5 does indeed refer to baptism. And we determine this by comparing Scripture with Scripture: precisely as Calvin recommends:

John 3:5 Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

1 Corinthians 6:11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

Titus 3:5 he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit,

John: “enter the kingdom of God”

1 Corinthians: “you were sanctified, you were justified”

Titus: “saved”

John: “born of water”

1 Corinthians: “you were washed”

Titus: “washing of regeneration”

John: “born of ... the spirit”

1 Corinthians: “... in the Spirit of our God”

Titus: “renewal in the Holy Spirit”

Calvin, in his *Commentaries*, agrees that Titus 3:5 refers to baptism, but he interprets 1 Corinthians 6:11 metaphorically. I contend that by taking into account the cross-referencing and terminological similarity of all three, he ought to hold that all three passages refer to baptism.

11. Baptism: Calvin vs. the Church Fathers

You may make your choice of these definitions, which in meaning differ not from that of Augustine, which defines a sacrament to be a visible

sign of a sacred thing, or a visible form of an invisible grace, but does not contain a better or surer explanation. (IV, 14:1)

St. Augustine, in direct opposition to Calvin, held that baptism conferred regeneration:

[T]he churches of Christ hold inherently that without baptism and participation at the table of the Lord it is impossible for any man to attain either to the kingdom of God or to salvation and life eternal? This is the witness of Scripture too.

(*Forgiveness and the Just Deserts of Sin, and the Baptism of Infants* 1:24:34 [A.D. 412])

The sacrament of baptism is most assuredly the sacrament of regeneration.

(*Ibid.*, 2:27:43)

Baptism washes away all, absolutely all, our sins, whether of deed, word, or thought, whether sins original or added, whether knowingly or unknowingly contracted.

(*Against Two Letters of the Pelagians* 3:3:5 [A.D. 420])

The Church fathers agree, as to baptismal grace. Here is a sampling of the avalanche of citations that could be brought to bear (with “grace” italicized):

St. Irenaeus

‘And [Naaman] dipped himself ... seven times in the Jordan’ [2 Kgs. 5:14]. It was not for nothing that Naaman of old, when suffering from leprosy, was purified upon his being baptized, but [this served] as an indication to us. For as we are lepers in sin, we are made clean, by means of the sacred water and the invocation of the Lord, from our old transgressions, being spiritually regenerated as newborn babes, even as the Lord has declared: ‘Except a man be born again through water and the Spirit, he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.’

(*Fragment 34* [A.D. 190])

St. Clement of Alexandria

When we are baptized, we are enlightened. Being enlightened, we are adopted as sons. Adopted as sons, we are made perfect. Made perfect, we become immortal ... 'and sons of the Most High' [Ps. 82:6]. This work is variously called *grace*, illumination, perfection, and washing. It is a washing by which we are cleansed of sins, a gift of *grace* by which the punishments due our sins are remitted, an illumination by which we behold that holy light of salvation.

(*The Instructor of Children* 1:6:26:1 [A.D. 191])

St. Cyprian of Carthage

While I was lying in darkness ... I thought it indeed difficult and hard to believe ... that divine mercy was promised for my salvation, so that anyone might be born again and quickened unto a new life by the laver of the saving water, he might put off what he had been before, and, although the structure of the body remained, he might change himself in soul and mind. ... But afterwards, when the stain of my past life had been washed away by means of the water of rebirth, a light from above poured itself upon my chastened and now pure heart; afterwards, through the Spirit which is breathed from heaven, a second birth made of me a new man.

(*To Donatus* 3–4 [A.D. 246])

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

If any man does not receive baptism, he does not have salvation. The only exception is the martyrs, who, even without water, will receive baptism, for the Savior calls martyrdom a baptism [Mark 10:38].... Bearing your sins, you go down into the water; but the calling down of *grace* seals your soul and does not permit that you afterwards be swallowed up by the fearsome dragon. You go down dead in your sins, and you come up made alive in righteousness.

(*Catechetical Lectures* 3:10, 12 [A.D. 350])

St. Ephraem

The baptized when they come up are sanctified;—the sealed when they go down are pardoned.—They who come up have put on glory;—they who go down have cast off sin.

(Hymns for the Feast of the Epiphany, 6:9 [ante A. D. 373])

St. Basil the Great

For prisoners, baptism is ransom, forgiveness of debts, the death of sin, regeneration of the soul, a resplendent garment, an unbreakable seal, a chariot to heaven, a royal protector, a gift of adoption.

(Sermons on Moral and Practical Subjects 13:5 [A.D. 379])

St. Gregory of Nazianz

Such is the grace and power of baptism; not an overwhelming of the world as of old, but a purification of the sins of each individual, and a complete cleansing from all the bruises and stains of sin. And since we are double-made, I mean of body and soul, and the one part is visible, the other invisible, so the cleansing also is twofold, by water and the Spirit; the one received visibly in the body, the other concurring with it invisibly and apart from the body; the one typical, the other real and cleansing the depths.

(Oration on Holy Baptism 7–8 [A.D. 388])

St. Ambrose of Milan

The Lord was baptized, not to be cleansed himself but to cleanse the waters, so that those waters, cleansed by the flesh of Christ which knew no sin, might have the power of baptism. Whoever comes, therefore, to the washing of Christ lays aside his sins.

(Commentary on Luke 2:83 [A.D. 389])

St. Augustine

Baptism washes away all, absolutely all, our sins, whether of deed, word, or thought, whether sins original or added, whether knowingly or unknowingly contracted.

(Against Two Letters of the Pelagians 3:3:5 [A.D. 420])

This is the meaning of the great sacrament of baptism, which is celebrated among us: all who attain to this *grace* die thereby to sin—as he himself [Jesus] is said to have died to sin because he died in the flesh (that is, ‘in the likeness of sin’)—and they are thereby alive by being reborn in the baptismal font, just as he rose again from the sepulcher. This is the case no matter what the age of the body.

(*Handbook on Faith, Hope, and Love* 13[41] [A.D. 421]).

Chapter Four

IV. The Holy Eucharist and the Sacrifice of the Mass

1. The Eucharist in the Bible: Sign and Seal Only?

First, then, the signs are bread and wine, which represent the invisible food which we receive from the body and blood of Christ. (IV, 17:1)

[B]read is given as a symbol of the body of Christ, ... When we behold wine set forth as a symbol of blood, ... For if we duly consider what profit we have gained by the breaking of his sacred body, and the shedding of his blood, we shall clearly perceive that these properties of bread and wine, agreeably to this analogy, most appropriately represent it when they are communicated to us. (IV, 17:3)

... to seal and confirm that promise by which he testifies that his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed, ... (IV, 17:4)

And truly the thing there signified he exhibits and offers to all who sit down at that spiritual feast, ... For this reason the apostle said, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ"? (1 Cor. 10:16). There is no ground to object that the expression is figurative, and gives the sign the name of the thing signified. I admit, indeed, that the breaking of bread is a symbol, not the reality.... we duly infer from the exhibition of the symbol that the thing itself is exhibited. For unless we would charge God with deceit, we will never presume to say that he holds forth an empty symbol. Therefore, if by the breaking of bread the Lord truly represents the partaking of his body, there ought to be no doubt whatever that he truly exhibits and performs it. The rule which the pious ought always to observe is, whenever they see the symbols instituted by the Lord, to think and feel

surely persuaded that the truth of the thing signified is also present. (IV, 17:10)

I hold then (as has always been received in the Church, and is still taught by those who feel aright), that the sacred mystery of the Supper consists of two things—the corporeal signs, which, presented to the eye, represent invisible things in a manner adapted to our weak capacity, and the spiritual truth, which is at once figured and exhibited by the signs. (IV, 17:11)

Hence proceeded that fictitious transubstantiation for which they fight more fiercely in the present day than for all the other articles of their faith. For the first architects of local presence could not explain, how the body of Christ could be mixed with the substance of bread, without forthwith meeting with many absurdities. Hence it was necessary to have recourse to the fiction, that there is a conversion of the bread into body, not that properly instead of bread it becomes body, but that Christ, in order to conceal himself under the figure, reduces the substance to nothing. (IV, 17:14)

But when these absurdities are discarded, I willingly admit anything which helps to express the true and substantial communication of the body and blood of the Lord, as exhibited to believers under the sacred symbols of the Supper, understanding that they are received not by the imagination or intellect merely, but are enjoyed in reality as the food of eternal life. For the odium with which this view is regarded by the world, and the unjust prejudice incurred by its defence, there is no cause, unless it be in the fearful fascinations of Satan. What we teach on the subject is in perfect accordance with Scripture, contains nothing absurd, obscure, or ambiguous, is not unfavourable to true piety and solid edification; in short, has nothing in it to offend, save that, for some ages, while the ignorance and barbarism of sophists reigned in the Church, the clear light and open truth were unbecomingly suppressed. And yet as Satan, by means of turbulent spirits, is still, in the present day, exerting himself to the utmost to bring dishonour on this doctrine by all kinds of calumny and reproach, it is right to assert and defend it with the greatest care. (IV, 17:19)

But if they adhere so religiously to the words, inasmuch as that which our Saviour gave to his disciples he declared to be his body, there is nothing more alien from the strict meaning of the words than the fiction, that what was bread is now body. What Christ takes into his hands, and gives to the apostles, he declares to be his body; but he had taken bread, and, therefore, who sees not that what is given is still bread? Hence, nothing can be more absurd than to transfer what is affirmed of bread to the species of bread. (IV, 17:20)

All will say, that it is not done naturally. Not more agreeable is it to human reason to hold that the flesh of Christ penetrates to us, so as to be our food. In short, every one who may have tasted our doctrine, will be carried away with admiration of the secret power of God. But these worthy zealots fabricate for themselves a miracle, and think that without it God himself and his power vanish away. I would again admonish the reader carefully to consider the nature of our doctrine, whether it depends on common apprehension, or whether, after having surmounted the world on the wings of faith, it rises to heaven. We say that Christ descends to us, as well by the external symbol as by his Spirit, that he may truly quicken our souls by the substance of his flesh and blood. (IV, 17:24)

From this word, they have assumed that the body of Christ is visible in heaven, and yet lurks invisible on the earth under innumerable bits of bread. They will say that this is rendered necessary, in order that the body of Christ may be given in the Supper. In other words, because they have been pleased to extract a carnal eating from the words of Christ, carried away by their own prejudice, they have found it necessary to coin this subtlety, which is wholly repugnant to Scripture. (IV, 17:25)

Still I am free to confess that that mixture or transfusion of the flesh of Christ with our soul, which they teach, I repudiate, because it is enough for us that Christ, out of the substance of his flesh, breathes life into our souls, nay, diffuses his own life into us, though the real flesh of Christ does not enter us. (IV, 17:32)

The same view must be taken of communion, which, according to them, has no existence unless they swallow the flesh of Christ under the

bread. But no slight insult is offered to the Spirit if we refuse to believe that it is by his incomprehensible agency that we communicate in the body and blood of Christ.... curious men insisting on an extravagant mode of presence to which Scripture gives no countenance. (IV, 17:33)

Calvin asserts that the Eucharist is merely a sign and seal. But that is not what Jesus taught:

John 6:48–58 I am the bread of life. [49] Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. [50] This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. [51] I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.” [52] The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” [53] So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; [54] he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. [55] For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. [56] He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. [57] As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. [58] This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live for ever.”

Again, we must, therefore, change Scripture so that it is more agreeable to Calvin’s eucharistic teachings:

John 6:50–51 (RCV; Revised Calvin Version) This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and signify that he is already in a state in which he would not die. [51] I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he proves that that he is already in a state in which he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

John 6:53–58 (RC8V) So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you can’t give testimony that you already have life in you; [54] he who eats my

flesh and drinks my blood shows that he already had eternal life, and that I was already going to raise him up at the last day. [55] For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. [56] He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood signifies that he already had been abiding in me, and I in him. [57] As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me was already living because of me. [58] This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread gives testimony that he already was living for ever.”

It only remains that the whole become ours by application. This is done by means of the gospel, and more clearly by the sacred Supper, where Christ offers himself to us with all his blessings, and we receive him in faith. The sacrament, therefore, does not make Christ become for the first time the bread of life; but, while it calls to remembrance that Christ was made the bread of life that we may constantly eat him, it gives us a taste and relish for that bread, and makes us feel its efficacy. For it assures us, first, that whatever Christ did or suffered was done to give us life; and, secondly, that this quickening is eternal; by it we are ceaselessly nourished, sustained, and preserved in life. (IV, 17:5)

This is very subtle erroneous reasoning: the Eucharist has power not because of what it inherently *is*: the Body and Blood of Christ, but only because it *represents* other things that we comprehend in and with faith. Hence, “it calls to remembrance that Christ was made the bread of life.”

[H]is body will be as bread in regard to the spiritual life of the soul, because it was to be delivered to death for our salvation, and that he extends it to us for food when he makes us partakers of it by faith. Wherefore he once gave himself that he might become bread, ... (IV, 17:5)

Jesus doesn't become a piece of bread. This is the absurdity that Catholics are accused of believing: as if we consciously believe we are worshiping wheat bread rather than Jesus Himself. In fact, it is Calvin's position that actually entails this. Because, for him, the Eucharist remains bread, Calvin then applies the same state of affairs to Catholic worship; therefore, he accuse us of idolatry because we worship Jesus in the

Eucharist (whereas he and his followers do not, precisely because for them it is not actually the Body and Blood).

If anything is truly characterized as idolatry, it is the Calvinist position, since the bread never ceases being what it is. Catholics believe that God can be specially present in many different ways: for example, as in the pillars of cloud and fire, or in the ark of the covenant and holy of holies. The Eucharist takes it a step further, in light of the Incarnation, since God has now become man. Calvin doesn't grasp the new realities that the incarnation has opened up.

Just because the Holy Eucharist is a mystery (not completely grasped by reason alone and requiring much supernatural faith), it doesn't follow that we have to relegate it to mysticism, rather than literalness and realism. We need not fully *understand* a thing in order to believe that it is *real* and not merely symbolic of something else that is real.

In other words, lack of full understanding in our reason is no necessity for moving to symbolism (or "mysticism"), as a way to comprehend the mystery. That doesn't follow. We don't have to place everything in the neat little box of our own making, based on our inadequate comprehension. We can believe, for example, that electricity or light or protons and neutrons and electrons are real things, without fully understanding all the ins and outs of them.

The sum is, that the flesh and blood of Christ feed our souls just as bread and wine maintain and support our corporeal life. (IV, 17:10)

It doesn't necessarily follow (logically) that the "flesh and blood of Christ" must be received only mystically and immaterially, because our souls are immaterial, which is subtly implied by the comparison above:

Physical food supports a physical body.

Non-physical spiritual food supports non-physical souls.

For there would be no aptitude in the sign, did not our souls find their nourishment in Christ. This could not be, did not Christ truly form one with us, and refresh us by the eating of his flesh, and the drinking of his blood. But though it seems an incredible thing that the flesh of Christ,

while at such a distance from us in respect of place, should be food to us, ... (IV, 17:10)

Here we start to realize how far from the truth of the Eucharist Calvin really is. Note how he separates the flesh of Christ from the Eucharist, by stating that it is in actuality “at such a distance from us in respect of place.” This gets into his notion (which he elaborates later) that Jesus cannot possibly extend His incarnation in a miraculous eucharistic sense; Calvin has Him confined in heaven, as if that is required of a Divine Person Who is omnipresent and omnipotent.

[L]et us remember how far the secret virtue of the Holy Spirit surpasses all our conceptions, and how foolish it is to wish to measure its immensity by our feeble capacity. Therefore, what our mind does not comprehend let faith conceive—viz. that the Spirit truly unites things separated by space. (IV, 17:10)

We need not limit God due to our own lack of understanding of biblical, Christological categories. Why cannot the same Spirit (Who is the Omnipotent God) unite things spatially and physically? Why is one thing considered impossible while the other is possible merely because it is non-material? Calvin arbitrarily *limits God*. This is a major flaw in his eucharistic theology.

Why does Calvin think in this way? My theory through the years has been to posit a certain antipathy to matter as inferior to spirit (hearkening back to the Docetic heresy and the pagan Greek philosophy that also led to Gnosticism): an aversion to sacramentalism, and ultimately an insufficient understanding of the import of the incarnation, which lies *behind* eucharistic sacramentalism.

If one looks down on matter as inferior, then one will tend to reduce physical sacraments to mere symbolism or a little less objectionable mysticism, or to discard them altogether. And this antipathy extends to a rejection of things like the sacrifice of the mass and relics as well.

For why does the Lord put the symbol of his body into your hands, but just to assure you that you truly partake of him? If this is true let us feel as much assured that the visible sign is given us in seal of an invisible gift as that his body itself is given to us. (IV, 17:10)

I submit that there is a certain lack of faith exhibited in these errors. Calvin doesn't have enough faith to believe that God could become physically present: Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity, in what was once bread and wine. It takes a lot of faith to believe that, and Calvin and his followers lack it.

False teaching, therefore, has the sad effect of lessening the faith of its adherents, and making them less aware of supernatural realities that they might otherwise be open to, but for the inculcation of false teachings and misguided category mistakes.

As we cannot at all doubt that it is bounded according to the invariable rule in the human body, and is contained in heaven, where it was once received, and will remain till it return to judgment, so we deem it altogether unlawful to bring it back under these corruptible elements, or to imagine it everywhere present. (IV, 17:12)

Some employ a rather more subtle evasion, That the body which is given in the sacrament is glorious and immortal, and that, therefore, there is no absurdity in its being contained under the sacrament in various places, or in no place, and in no form. But, I ask, what did Christ give to his disciples the day before he suffered? Do not the words say that he gave the mortal body, which was to be delivered shortly after? (IV, 17:17)

Jesus' *body* is not "everywhere present." It is sacramentally present in the consecrated bread and wine at mass. In fact, the very notion of consecration proves that transubstantiation does not involve a "bodily omnipresence" since what was once bread and wine miraculously becomes the Body and Blood of Christ. Therefore, if they were not that before consecration, then this proves that Jesus' body is not omnipresent itself, but *becomes* present locally during mass.

Jesus could "walk through" walls after His resurrection (Jn 20:19, 26). The normal physical limitations of a human body no longer applied to Him. In another example, in His appearance to the two disciples walking to Emmaus, they didn't recognize him the whole time, then when they did (after He broke bread: a clear eucharistic referent), "he vanished out of their sight" (Luke 24:31).

It was a supernatural thing. He was there with them, and then suddenly He was not. More is in play here than ordinary physical laws applying to human bodies. There is no reason why He couldn't and shouldn't do the same with regard to the Holy Eucharist. It's entirely possible and plausible.

The second coming is of the same nature. It is Jesus in His physical body. But it transcends the limitations and laws of physics, because it is said that everyone on the earth will see it. It isn't physically possible on a spherical earth for Him to be in one place, and yet all see Him at the same time. But it is possible for God because it is a supernatural occurrence, and transcends the laws of physics:

Matthew 24:30 then will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory; (cf. Zech 12:10)

Revelation 1:7 Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, every one who pierced him; and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen. (cf. possible cross-reference: Isaiah 40:5)

If God can supersede the laws of physics in the second coming, He can and does also do so in the Holy Eucharist. He is no more limited in the latter than he is in the second coming or was in His post-resurrection appearances. Calvin's argument is biblically shallow, and lacks faith. Even a mere man, Philip, was "caught away" and transported to another place by God (Acts 8:39–40).

God clearly can perform any miracle He so chooses. This particular one entails no suspension of the principles of the incarnation, once the orthodox doctrine of two natures of Christ is correctly understood. Jesus can be both incarnate and present in many places in the Eucharist, just as He can be incarnate and present spiritually everywhere (something all Protestants believe). Neither scenario is contradictory or impossible for God. They are simply miraculous and supernatural.

And here what a door is opened to Marcion, if the body of Christ was seen humble and mortal in one place, glorious and immortal in another! And yet, if their opinion is well-founded, the same thing happens every

day, because they are forced to admit that the body of Christ, which is in itself visible, lurks invisibly under the symbol of bread. And yet those who send forth such monstrous dogmas, so far from being ashamed at the disgrace, assail us with virulent invectives for not subscribing to them. (IV, 17:17)

How is that different in essence from His being hidden to the eyes of His disciples even when He was present in human form (Lk 24:15–16, 31, 36–37; John 20:14–15)? He was invisible to their eyes, too, yet no less present. How is it different from God before the incarnation, appearing in fire, clouds, and burning bushes? He even appeared as a man in theophanies, with the people not always knowing Who He was?

None of this suggests that the Catholic belief is like Marcion or a “monstrous dogma.” All it suggests is that Calvin doesn’t form his thoughts within the backdrop of a thoroughly biblical worldview. He is too influenced by Nestorianism and Docetism: derived in turn from false elements of pagan Greek philosophy.

But if we are carried to heaven with our eyes and minds, that we may there behold Christ in the glory of his kingdom, as the symbols invite us to him in his integrity, so, under the symbol of bread, we must feed on his body, and, under the symbol of wine, drink separately of his blood, and thereby have the full enjoyment of him. (IV, 17:18)

Calvin proposes that we “travel to heaven” every time we partake of communion, and he thinks that is a more plausible interpretation of the eucharistic biblical texts than the Catholic or even Lutheran views. But there is not a hint of it in Scripture.

For though he withdrew his flesh from us, and with his body ascended to heaven, he, however, sits at the right hand of the Father; that is, he reigns in power and majesty, and the glory of the Father. This kingdom is not limited by any intervals of space, nor circumscribed by any dimensions. Christ can exert his energy wherever he pleases, in earth and heaven, can manifest his presence by the exercise of his power, can always be present with his people, breathing into them his own life, can live in them, sustain, confirm, and invigorate them, and preserve them safe, just as if he were with them in the body; in fine, can feed them with

his own body, communion with which he transfuses into them. After this manner, the body and blood of Christ are exhibited to us in the sacrament. (IV, 17:18)

Calvin states the right premises, but fails to follow them through to their proper conclusion. If indeed Jesus Christ “is not limited by any intervals of space, nor circumscribed by any dimensions” and if indeed He can “exert his energy wherever he pleases, in earth and heaven” then why does Calvin object to His bodily presence in the Eucharist, which is what the Church had always taught? Why does he oppose it on such flimsy and absurd, non-biblical grounds?

The presence of Christ in the Supper we must hold to be such as neither affixes him to the element of bread, nor encloses him in bread, nor circumscribes him in any way (this would obviously detract from his celestial glory); ... All these things are clearly repugnant to his true human nature. (IV, 17:19)

Why does it “obviously detract” from His glory, since God had long since manifested Himself as “enclosed” in or “affixed” to fire, clouds, burning bushes, and the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant (and within the holy of holies in the tabernacle and temple)? Why is the Eucharist suddenly an alleged radical departure from all *that*? If the Eucharist “circumscribes” God, then why do not all these *other* things, too? What’s the big difference? Such muddleheaded thinking is divorced from the rich storehouse of biblical analogies and cross-references.

Catholics believe that Jesus Christ is received Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity in the Eucharist: not just His “human nature.” Jesus is a Divine Person. Calvin’s continued separation of the natures smacks of Nestorianism.

Let us never allow ourselves to lose sight of the two restrictions. First, Let there be nothing derogatory to the heavenly glory of Christ. This happens whenever he is brought under the corruptible elements of this world, (IV, 17:19)

Jesus has plenty of heavenly glory, but that didn’t stop one writer of inspired Scripture (after the ascension and Jesus’ glorification in heaven)

from describing Him as “a *Lamb* standing, as though it had been slain” (Rev 5:6). He continues to refer to Jesus in heaven as the “Lamb” (with direct Passover and crucifixion and eucharistic implications) over and over (Rev 5:8, 12–13; 6:1, 16; 7:9–10, 14, 17; 8:1; 12:11; 13:8, 11; 14:1, 4, 10; 15:3; 17:14; 19:7, 9; 21:9, 14, 22–23, 27; 22:1, 3).

Let no property be assigned to his body inconsistent with his human nature. This is done when it is either said to be infinite, or made to occupy a variety of places at the same time. (IV, 17:19)

I guess Calvin is forbidding properties like walking through walls or being seen by all on the earth simultaneously at the second coming. The supernatural transcends the laws and limitations of natural law. Since Jesus created those very laws, He has the prerogative of bypassing them, should He so desire.

Wherefore the Scripture, when it speaks of our participation with Christ, refers its whole efficacy to the Spirit. Instead of many, one passage will suffice. Paul, in the Epistle to the Romans (Rom. 8:9–11), shows that the only way in which Christ dwells in us is by his Spirit. By this, however, he does not take away that communion of flesh and blood of which we now speak, but shows that it is owing to the Spirit alone that we possess Christ wholly, and have him abiding in us. (IV, 17:12)

I again repeat, since the Supper is nothing but a conspicuous attestation to the promise which is contained in the sixth chapter of John—viz. that Christ is the bread of life, who came down from heaven, that visible bread must intervene, in order that that spiritual bread may be figured, unless we would destroy all the benefits with which God here favours us for the purpose of sustaining our infirmity. Then on what ground could Paul infer that we are all one bread, and one body in partaking together of that one bread, if only the semblance of bread, and not the natural reality, remained? (IV, 17:14)

The indwelling itself is spiritual, and it is said that Jesus dwells inside of us, as well as the Holy Spirit, and indeed God the Father. But the same Scripture uses realistic language in describing the Body of Christ. Calvin

himself alluded to this in passing not long before in his book. The clearest, most graphic example of that is in conjunction with St. Paul's conversion:

Acts 9:3–4 And he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" [5] And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting;

Acts 22:7–8 And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' [8] And I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' And he said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you are persecuting.'

Acts 26:14–15 And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It hurts you to kick against the goads.' [15] And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.'

Paul wasn't literally persecuting Jesus in the flesh. He was warring against the Body of Christ. Jesus assumes here that the "Body of Christ" or the Church is literally identified with Him, in some very real sense. It's the typically pungent, literal, graphic language and categories of the Bible. Paul was persecuting the *Church*:

Acts 9:1–2 But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest [2] and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Acts 22:4–5 I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, [5] as the high priest and the whole council of elders bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brethren, and I journeyed to Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished.

Acts 26:10–11 I not only shut up many of the saints in prison, by authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. [11] And I punished them often in all the

synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme; and in raging fury against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

1 Corinthians 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

Galatians 1:23 For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it; (cf. 1:23)

But Jesus told him that he was persecuting *Him*. This graphic one-to-one equation is seen elsewhere:

Ephesians 1:22–23 and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, [23] which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all.

Ephesians 5:23 ... Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.

Ephesians 5:28–32 Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. [29] For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, [30] because we are members of his body. [31] “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” [32] This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church;

Paul also reiterates the equation of persecution of the Church being the same as persecuting Jesus Himself:

1 Timothy 1:12–13 I thank him who has given me strength for this, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful by appointing me to his service, [13] though I formerly blasphemed and persecuted and insulted him; but I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief,

Elsewhere we see in the Apostle Paul not only very strong eucharistic realism (1 Cor 10:16; 11:27–30) but also an identification with the very suffering of Christ, in a startlingly realistic manner:

Colossians 1:24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, (cf. 2 Cor 4:10; Gal 6:17; Phil 3:10)

Calvin can't spiritualize away Paul's bodily sufferings, as if they weren't physical in nature. Likewise, he can't spiritualize away the Holy Eucharist. Scripture is consistently realistic in tone, tenor, and language with regard to *all* these matters.

God was so present in the ark of the covenant, that Uzzah was killed instantly simply because he innocently touched it, to keep it from falling over (2 Sam 6:3–7; 1 Chron 13:7–10). Seventy men of Bethshemesh were slain because they (also seemingly innocently) looked into it (1 Sam 6:19). God was so present in the holy of holies (Ex 26:33; 1 Kings 6:19), that contained the ark of the covenant (Ex 26:34; 40:21; 1 Kings 8:6; 2 Chron 5:7), that the priests only went in there once a year, on the day of atonement, and anyone who did on any other day, or not according to the proper ceremony, might be killed (Lev 16:2, 13). The river Jordan stopped flowing when the ark was carried through it (Josh 3:8–17; 4:1–18).

Joshua even bowed before the ark of the covenant on his face in a worshipful posture (Josh 7:6), and Levite priests thanked and praised God before it (1 Chron 16:4), just as Catholics genuflect and bow before the Holy Eucharist, and adore the Lord therein. King David “offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD” next to the ark (2 Sam 6:17), which is a precursor of the sacrifice of the mass. King Solomon did the same (1 Kings 3:15; 2 Chron 5:6), and so did the Levites (1 Chron 16:1).

Catholic practices are essentially nothing that hadn't been done nearly 3000 years ago. They are made far more meaningful, however, after the incarnation and crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is easy to see how great is the superstition under which not only the vulgar but the leaders also, have laboured for many ages, and still labour, in Popish Churches. (IV, 17:13)

If Calvin wishes to condemn the entirety of patristic eucharistic theology (and the explicit biblical rationale behind it), he is free to do so, but this also means that he can't pretend to be “reforming” the Church

back to her former state in this regard, since there never was a time when the Church believed as he does regarding the Eucharist. He can't "have his cake and eat it too."

If he wants to oppose the massive, unarguable historical evidence of early Church beliefs on the Eucharist, then he can't at the same time maintain a pretense of supposedly going back to it and getting rid of "Romish" accretions and corruptions and inventions. He should honestly admit that his is no reform at all, but rather, a novel revolution of thought and worship practices.

Little solicitous as to true faith (by which alone we attain to the fellowship of Christ, and become one with him), provided they have his carnal presence, which they have fabricated without authority from the word, they think he is sufficiently present. Hence we see, that all which they have gained by their ingenious subtlety is to make bread to be regarded as God. (IV, 17:13)

Calvin does the latter, as I alluded to above, since he makes the bread remain bread, yet wants to talk as if God is specially, mystically, spiritually present in it. So if anyone is confusing bread and God, it is Calvin. He is mixing the two in an odd, illogical manner. Lutherans, on the other hand, make it clear that *both* bread and God are present, and distinguish between the two, while Catholics explicitly hold to a *change* in substance from bread to God (the literal meaning of *transubstantiation*).

Therefore, neither Lutherans nor Catholics "make bread to be regarded as God." We have plenty of biblical warrant. But apparently for Calvin, Scripture isn't clear enough as it is. So it needs to be modified a bit. Here, then, is the *Revised Calvin Version* (RCV) of the classic eucharistic texts:

Luke 22:19–20 (RC9V) And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is represents my body which is given for you, as a sign and seal. Do this in remembrance of me." [20] And likewise the cup after supper, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you represents the new covenant in my blood, as a sign and seal."

1 Corinthians 10:16 (RC10V) The cup of blessing which we bless, does it not represent and signify in a spiritual manner the blood of Christ,

that we mystically participate in? The bread which we break, does it not represent and signify in a spiritual manner the body of Christ, that we mystically participate in?

1 Corinthians 11:27–29 (RC11V) Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning what represents and signifies as a spiritual sign the body and blood of the Lord. [28] Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. [29] For any one who eats and drinks without discerning what represents and signifies as a spiritual sign the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself.

The meaning would have no congruity, unless the truth which is there figured had a living image in the external sign. Christ wished to testify by an external symbol that his flesh was food. (IV, 17:14)

That's not what He said! Calvin is eisegetically reading into the text. Jesus said "this is my body"—not "this *represents* my body as a *sign* and *symbol*." St. Paul casually assumed the same eucharistic realism, and even stated that those approaching the Eucharist unworthily were guilty of profaning Jesus' body and blood (1 Cor 11:27–30): something that makes no sense whatever if only symbols are present.

If he exhibited merely an empty show of bread, and not true bread, where is the analogy or similitude to conduct us from the visible thing to the invisible? For, in order to make all things consistent, the meaning cannot extend to more than this, that we are fed by the species of Christ's flesh; just as, in the case of baptism, if the figure of water deceived the eye, it would not be to us a sure pledge of our ablution; nay, the fallacious spectacle would rather throw us into doubt. The nature of the sacrament is therefore overthrown, if in the mode of signifying the earthly sign corresponds not to the heavenly reality; and, accordingly, the truth of the mystery is lost if true bread does not represent the true body of Christ. (IV, 17:14)

In the Holy Eucharist Jesus gives us *Himself*, not just signs and figures of Himself. That is the beauty and profundity of it. It extends the incarnation. When God was known as a spirit only, He was *especially present* spiritually

and immaterially, yet directly connected with physical objects, as in the ark of the covenant, or fire, or clouds.

Even then He manifested Himself physically on occasion (as in theophanies). Now, after the incarnation and sacrifice of the lamb, and the resurrection, He makes Himself present physically as well, in a miraculous way. Why this should be scandalous to anyone is a bigger mystery than transubstantiation itself. Jesus is our paschal lamb. The lamb was eaten at every Passover. If Calvin wants to talk analogies, the Eucharist shouldn't be compared to baptism, but to the Passover meal, which is what the Last Supper was.

But Calvin would have it that the Jews ate lamb, while Christians eat merely "special" bread and wine, representing Jesus' Body and Blood. This nullifies the entire analogy of the sacrificial lamb now being Christ Himself, and forsakes the typical Jewish realism and literalism, substituting for it a Greek abstraction and disembodied ethereal spiritualism. That's a step backward, not forward.

They could not have been so shamefully deluded by the impostures of Satan had they not been fascinated by the erroneous idea, that the body of Christ included under the bread is transmitted by the bodily mouth into the belly. The cause of this brutish imagination was, that consecration had the same effect with them as magical incantation. (IV, 17:15)

"Magic" is something that Calvin has derisively superimposed onto Catholic doctrine. It is not magic by *men's* will and power, but mystery and miracle by *God's* will and power. He is the one who set up Holy Communion, at the Last Supper, and in the John 6 discourse. All we're doing is being obedient, in doing what He commanded us to do, and eating His Body and Blood, as He said we should do in order to be saved (John 6).

Calvin is foolish enough to apply to Catholics what the pagan Romans applied to all Christians: a notion that Holy Communion was a crude cannibalism. He'd rather think like a pagan than like St. Paul and apostolic Christians.

Others, in interpreting the particle *is*, as equivalent to being transubstantiated, have recourse to a gloss which is forced and violently

wrested. (IV, 17:20)

“Is” is simple enough to understand in English. What other language could be used if indeed the writer meant a literal equation (as we hold)? If He uses “is” Calvin and others deny the plain meaning anyway. If He had used “sign” or some such, then Calvin would have had a field day claiming that this proves symbolism, whereas Jesus referred to the “sign of Jonah” and that was one literal event signifying or giving an analogy to another real event: His resurrection, so that even the terminology of “sign” doesn’t necessarily prove that there is no physical reality.

They have no ground, therefore, for pretending that they are moved by a reverence for the words. The use of the term *is*, for being converted into something else, is unknown to every tongue and nation. (IV, 17:20)

We agree. At that point in the narrative, Catholics contend that the bread and wine have already been transformed, so the “is” doesn’t refer to the act of consecration and the miracle, but rather, to the consecrated elements that have already been miraculously changed.

But seeing it impossible to maintain the simple proposition that the bread is the body, they endeavoured to evade the difficulty by concealing themselves under those forms of expression. (IV, 17:20)

No position maintains *that*. Calvin says it is mystical symbolism and spiritual equation; Zwinglians and many present-day Protestants opt for pure symbolism only; Lutherans hold that they are both present; we say that one has become the other.

Others, who are bolder, hesitate not to assert that, strictly speaking, the bread is body, and in this way prove that they are truly of the letter. If it is objected that the bread, therefore, is Christ, and, being Christ, is God, —they will deny it, because the words of Christ do not expressly say so. But they gain nothing by their denial, since all agree that the whole Christ is offered to us in the Supper. It is intolerable blasphemy to affirm, without figure, of a fading and corruptible element, that it is Christ. (IV, 17:20)

We agree. So do Lutherans. This is why it is ridiculous for Calvinists (and Lutherans) to accuse us of idolatry. It can't possibly be, because nothing has *replaced* God. Calvinists accuse Lutherans of the same, but it is equally absurd because they haven't equated bread and wine with God, either.

[T]he name of the visible sign is given to the thing signified, as when God is said to have appeared to Moses in the bush; (IV, 17:21)

God did appear in the burning bush; this is not even an example of what Calvin is discussing. The bush wasn't called God. The Scripture says that God was "in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush" (Ex 3:2) and "God called to him out of the bush" (Ex 3:3).

That's why those analogies are precisely in harmony with the Catholic view of the Eucharist, and why I used them in that fashion. It shows how God can be "in" matter, while not *becoming* the matter. An omnipresent God was in the burning bush in some mysterious fashion. Likewise He is in what still appears to be bread and wine in a mysterious fashion.

Their objection, that it is not probable that when Christ was providing special comfort for the apostles in adversity, he spoke enigmatically or obscurely,—supports our view. For, had it not occurred to the apostles that the bread was called the body figuratively, as being a symbol of the body, the extraordinary nature of the thing would doubtless have filled them with perplexity. For, at this very period, John relates, that the slightest difficulties perplexed them (John 14:5, 8; 16:17). They debate, among themselves, how Christ is to go to the Father, and not understanding that the things which were said referred to the heavenly Father, raise a question as to how he is to go out of the world until they shall see him? How, then, could they have been so ready to believe what is repugnant to all reason—viz. that Christ was seated at table under their eye, and yet was contained invisible under the bread? As they attest their consent by eating this bread without hesitation, it is plain that they understood the words of Christ in the same sense as we do, considering what ought not to seem unusual when mysteries are spoken of, that the name of the thing signified was transferred to the sign. (IV, 17:23)

That doesn't follow at all. We simply don't have enough information. They could have been obedient while not understanding; could have partaken in a stunned, bewildered silence, assuming that Jesus would explain what He meant later, as He did with His parables; it may have been inappropriate to speak in a ceremonial sense at the time, during the Passover meal. So this is a rather weak argument from silence.

What we *do* know is that in John 6, some of His disciples were perplexed about His meaning (Jn 6:60–61). Jesus never explains that it is merely a symbol (6:62–63 and previous related passages in the same discourse), and so these disciples forsook Him (John 6:66–67). We know for a fact that it was due to disbelief and lack of faith, because Jesus said so, and the narrator reiterates it (6:64).

That is actual, explicit scriptural proof from a concrete incident. The only instance we know of Jesus' disciples leaving Him was because they denied the real presence in the Eucharist.

This infamous falsehood cannot be completely wiped away without disposing of another charge. They give out that we are so wedded to human reason, that we attribute nothing more to the power of God than the order of nature admits, and common sense dictates. (IV, 17:24)

That is what Calvin's logic regarding the Eucharist amounts to. He is caught up into a limited rationalistic worldview without seeming to realize that he is. He's a prisoner of his own false presuppositions. He lacks the perspective of Christian mystery, paradox, and miracle.

From these wicked calumnies, I appeal to the doctrine which I have delivered,—a doctrine which makes it sufficiently clear that I by no means measure this mystery by the capacity of human reason, or subject it to the laws of nature. (IV, 17:24)

What else can one call a view that wants to limit God by saying that Jesus' body can only be in heaven and not eucharistically present as well? It's *as if* he wants to deny that Jesus has a divine nature as well as a human nature.

I ask, whether it is from physics we have learned that Christ feeds our souls from heaven with his flesh, just as our bodies are nourished by

bread and wine? How has flesh this virtue of giving life to our souls?
(IV, 17:24)

It does in the same way that the crucifixion and Jesus' blood gave life to our souls (how could God do *that?*):

Acts 20:28 Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God which he obtained with the blood of his own Son.

Romans 3:25 whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith....

Romans 5:9 Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

Ephesians 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace

Ephesians 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ.

Colossians 1:20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Hebrews 9:11–14 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) [12] he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. [13] For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, [14] how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

Hebrews 10:19 Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus,

Hebrews 10:29 How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the man who has spurned the Son of God, and profaned the

blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace?

Hebrews 13:12 So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.

Hebrews 13:20 Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant,

1 Peter 1:18–19 You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, [19] but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

1 John 1:7 but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

Revelation 1:5 and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood

Revelation 5:9 and they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

Revelation 7:14 I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

He who feels not that in these few words are many miracles, is more than stupid; since nothing is more contrary to nature than to derive the spiritual and heavenly life of the soul from flesh, which received its origin from the earth, and was subjected to death, (IV, 17:24)

This mentality would take out the “physical, fleshly” incarnation and crucifixion and redemption and resurrection, too.

The question here is not, What could God do? but, What has he been pleased to do? We affirm that he has done what pleased him, and it pleased him that Christ should be in all respects like his brethren, “yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). What is our flesh? Is it not that which consists of certain dimensions? is confined within a certain place? is touched and seen?... Flesh must therefore be flesh, and spirit spirit; each under the law and condition on which God has created them. Now, the condition of flesh is, that it should have one certain place, its own dimensions, its own form. On that condition, Christ assumed the flesh, to which, as Augustine declares (Ep. ad Dardan.), he gave incorruption and glory, but without destroying its nature and reality. (IV, 17:24)

Jesus has shown that His body has elements that go beyond dimension and the usual restrictions. The resurrection, ascension, post-resurrection appearances, and the second coming are not ordinary physical events. Neither is the Eucharist. Calvin unnecessarily restricts his vision. Jesus’ flesh is a special case: He being God and having taken on a human body in the incarnation.

We will all have glorified bodies one day, so it isn’t implausible at all that Jesus Christ should manifest the extraordinary capabilities of a glorified body Himself: especially since He is God as well as man. There is nothing in the slightest bit strange or contradictory or implausible in that. Calvin is straining at gnats.

And why, say they, may not God make the same flesh occupy several different places, so as not to be confined to any particular place, and so as to have neither measure nor species? Fool! why do you require the power of God to make a thing to be at the same time flesh and not flesh? It is just as if you were to insist on his making light to be at the same time light and darkness. (IV, 17:24)

We don’t do that. We believe that it is His Body and Blood, but in a unique eucharistic fashion. It is Calvin’s word games and metaphysical hodge-podge that introduce contradictions and nonsense into the question.

But as nothing will be more effectual to confirm the faith of the pious than to show them that the doctrine which we have laid down is taken

from the pure word of God, and rests on its authority, I will make this plain with as much brevity as I can. The body with which Christ rose is declared, not by Aristotle, but by the Holy Spirit, to be finite, and to be contained in heaven until the last day. I am not unaware how confidently our opponents evade the passages which are quoted to this effect. Whenever Christ says that he will leave the world and go away (John 14:2, 28), they reply, that that departure was nothing more than a change of mortal state. Were this so, Christ would not substitute the Holy Spirit, to supply, as they express it, the defect of his absence, since he does not succeed in place of him, (IV, 17:26)

It is not only the Holy Spirit Who indwells us, but Christ as well, and this is particularly seen in the very same chapter that Calvin cites. The Holy Spirit is not a “substitute”:

John 14:18 I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you. (cf. 14:16–17)

John 14:20 In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

John 14:23 Jesus answered him, “If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”

John 15:4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.

John 17:23 I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me.

Romans 8:9–10 But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. [10] But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness.

1 Peter 1:11 they inquired what person or time was indicated by the Spirit of Christ within them when predicting the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory.

Moreover, God the Father indwells us as well (Jn 14:23; 1 Jn 3:24; 4:12–16). Scripture says many things about indwelling beyond just the Holy Spirit indwelling us: it refers to Jesus and the Father doing so (Jn 14:23), and the Father and the Holy Spirit (1 Jn 3:24; 4:12–16), and also “God” without specification as to Divine Persons (2 Cor 6:16). St. Augustine makes the same argument in his Tractate 75 on John 14:18–21:

After the promise of the Holy Spirit, lest any should suppose that the Lord was to give Him, as it were, in place of Himself, in any such way as that He Himself would not likewise be with them, He added the words: I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. *Orphani* [Greek] are *pupilli* [parent-less children] in Latin. The one is the Greek, the other the Latin name of the same thing: for in the psalm where we read, You are the helper of the fatherless [in the Latin version, *pupillo*], the Greek has *orphano*.

This is precisely the opposite of Calvin’s position. Calvin thinks that Christ wanted to “substitute the Holy Spirit,” but Augustine argues against “lest any should suppose that the Lord was to give Him, as it were, in place of Himself, in any such way as that He Himself would not likewise be with them.”

Furthermore, Calvin neglects or doesn’t comprehend an important and dogmatically accepted aspect of trinitarianism and Christology: what is known as the *perichoresis* (Greek) or *circuminsession* (Latin). Fr. John A. Hardon, S. J., in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary* (Doubleday, 1980) precisely defines it, under the first Greek term and then the Latin word (pp. 415–416 and 106–107):

The penetration and indwelling of the three persons reciprocally in one another. In the Greek conception of the Trinity there is an emphasis on the mutual penetration of the three persons, thus bringing out the unity of the divine essence. In the Latin idea ... the stress is more on the internal processions of the three divine persons. In both traditions,

however, the fundamental basis of the Trinitarian *perichoresis* is the one essence of the three persons in God.

The mutual immanence of the three distinct persons of the Holy Trinity. The Father is entirely in the Son, likewise in the Holy Spirit; and so is the Son in the Father and the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit in the Father and the Son. Circuminsession also identifies the mutual immanence of the two distinct natures in the one Person of Jesus Christ.

Certainly the advent of the Spirit and the ascension of Christ are set against each other, and hence it necessarily follows that Christ dwells with us according to the flesh, in the same way as that in which he sends his Spirit. (IV, 17:26)

No; He dwells in us spiritually in the same way as the Spirit, but this doesn't rule out a physical presence as well ("both/and" again), because it was Jesus, after all, Who took on human flesh; the Holy Spirit didn't do that. Nor are the ascension and the indwelling set against each other, as I have just shown. The ascension makes the indwelling of all Christians possible (there is a chronological progression here), but it is not in the sense that Jesus is not *also* present within us.

Moreover, he distinctly says that he would not always be in the world with his disciples (Mt. 26:11). This saying, also, they think they admirably dispose of, as if it were a denial by Christ that he would always be poor and mean, or liable to the necessities of a fading life. But this is plainly repugnant to the context, since reference is made not to poverty and want, or the wretched condition of an earthly life, but to worship and honour. (IV, 17:26)

To the contrary, the context is about anointing Him for His burial (26:7–10, 12–13) and the ending of His earthly sojourn as a man, in the natural sense. It is in *that* sense that Jesus was not to be with them always. This doesn't exclude the Eucharist.

Jesus returned to His disciples in His post-resurrection appearances, and these were physical. Hence, it makes sense that He would also return in a eucharistic fashion, to maintain His physical presence with men (as He

stressed in most graphic terms at the Last Supper and John 6 discourse). It's a beautiful thing.

Since they put so much confidence in his hiding-place of invisible presence, let us see how well they conceal themselves in it. First, they cannot produce a syllable from Scripture to prove that Christ is invisible; (IV, 17:29)

Is Calvin serious? That's rather easy:

Matthew 18:20 For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Matthew 28:20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.

John 14:20 In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. (cf. 14:23; 15:4; 17:23)

Romans 8:10 But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness. (cf. 8:9)

Ephesians 1:22–23 and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, [23] which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all.

Colossians 1:27 To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Colossians 3:11 ... Christ is all, and in all. (cf. Eph 4:6)

but they take for granted what no sound man will admit, that the body of Christ cannot be given in the Supper, unless covered with the mask of bread. This is the very point in dispute; so far is it from occupying the place of the first principle. And while they thus prate, they are forced to give Christ a twofold body, because, according to them, it is visible in itself in heaven, but in the Supper is invisible, by a special mode of dispensation. The beautiful consistency of this may easily be judged, both from other passages of Scripture, and from the testimony of Peter.

Peter says that the heavens must receive, or contain Christ, till he come again (Acts 3:21). (IV, 17:29)

But that verse has to be synthesized with all the ones above. If He is *exclusively* in heaven, as Calvin foolishly imagines, then how is He also “in” us (Jn 14:20, 23; 15:4; 17:23; Rom 8:10; Col 1:27; 1 Pet 1:11)? How is He constantly in our midst (Matt 18:20; 28:20)? How is He “in all” and how does He fill “all in all” (Eph 1:23; Col 3:11)? How much Scripture does he plan to ignore or explain away?

These men teach that he is in every place, but without form. (IV, 17:29)

And that is because it is a biblical teaching: in His divine nature He is omnipresent (as seen in the above eleven passages). If Calvin denies this then He is either denying the divinity of Jesus or he is again exhibiting Nestorian confusion and heresy (two things that he himself denies).

The oddest thing about all of this, however, is that elsewhere in the *Institutes* Calvin shows that he *does* believe in some sense of omnipresence of Jesus (and directly contradicts his statements above, denying that Christ could be in any sense invisible after the ascension):

[A]s God, he cannot be in any respect said to grow, works always for himself, knows every thing, does all things after the counsel of his own will, and is incapable of being seen or handled. (II, 14:2)

Yet now when he argues against the Catholic view of the Holy Eucharist, he wants to *deny* the same thing that he asserted *before* (and in a later section), simply because Jesus ascended to heaven.

Another absurdity which they obtrude upon us—viz. that if the Word of God became incarnate, it must have been enclosed in the narrow tenement of an earthly body, is sheer petulance. For although the boundless essence of the Word was united with human nature into one person, we have no idea of any enclosing. The Son of God descended miraculously from heaven, yet without abandoning heaven; was pleased to be conceived miraculously in the Virgin’s womb, to live on the earth, and hang upon the cross, and yet always filled the world as from the beginning. (II, 12:4)

Certainly when Paul says of the princes of this world that they “crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Cor. 2:8), he means not that he suffered anything in his divinity, but that Christ, who was rejected and despised, and suffered in the flesh, was likewise God and the Lord of glory. In this way, both the Son of man was in heaven because he was also Christ; and he who, according to the flesh, dwelt as the Son of man on earth, was also God in heaven. For this reason, he is said to have descended from heaven in respect of his divinity, not that his divinity quitted heaven to conceal itself in the prison of the body, but because, although he filled all things, it yet resided in the humanity of Christ corporeally, that is, naturally, and in an ineffable manner. There is a trite distinction in the schools which I hesitate not to quote. Although the whole Christ is everywhere, yet everything which is in him is not everywhere.... our whole Mediator is everywhere ... (IV, 17:30)

Thus, we observe an absurd scenario whereby Calvin thinks that Jesus “descended miraculously from heaven, yet without abandoning heaven” but that after He ascended to heaven He no longer “filled the world” or could be invisibly present (let alone invisibly). In other words, He must (to follow by “symmetrical logic” Calvin’s statement about the incarnation) abandon the *world*, and so cannot possibly be present in the Eucharist.

Calvin thinks that Jesus could become *incarnate* and still fill all in all, but He couldn’t *ascend* and be all in all. This makes no sense. If He is God, He *remains* God, and retains the attributes of His divine nature at all times. This doesn’t cease simply because He took on human nature and ascended to heaven. Moreover, in an earlier section, Calvin stated:

For, in order to exhort us to submission by his example, he shows, that when as God he might have displayed to the world the brightness of his glory, he gave up his right, and voluntarily emptied himself; that he assumed the form of a servant, and, contented with that humble condition, suffered his divinity to be concealed under a veil of flesh. (II, 13:2)

So Christ can come to us “concealed under a veil of flesh” but He cannot come “covered with the mask of bread” or “invisible, by a special mode of dispensation”? Why is one thing believed by Calvin, but the other denied

and disbelieved? On what grounds are they distinguished? This is one reason why Catholics believe that the Eucharist is an extension of the principle of the incarnation. Somehow human flesh can at the same time be God, and a divine nature and human nature can be in one man; therefore, what was once bread and wine can be the Body and Blood of Christ. Calvin condemns his *own* reasoning in this regard, when he writes:

For we must put far from us the heresy of Nestorius, who, presuming to dissect rather than distinguish between the two natures, devised a double Christ. (II, 14:4)

They say that it is unfair to subject a glorious body to the ordinary laws of nature. (IV, 17:29)

First of all, Christ is not subject to the “ordinary laws of nature” because He is the Creator and Lord of nature:

Matthew 28:18 ... All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [KJV: “power”]

Philippians 3:20–21 ... the Lord Jesus Christ, [21] who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Colossians 1:16–17 for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. [17] He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Hebrews 1:3 He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

1 Peter 3:22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him.

Therefore it is beyond silly to restrict Him in such a way now. Jesus was God when He was born in Bethlehem. He remains God since the time He ascended and was glorified. Therefore, He is omnipresent now; that

doesn't cease! Calvin's logic is thoroughly incoherent, inconsistent, and arbitrary. Our Lord Jesus Christ's body was no *ordinary* body when He took on human flesh, and it is no ordinary body now that He has been resurrected and glorified.

But the essential properties of a body are to be confined by space, to have dimension and form. (IV, 17:29)

Jesus transcended dimension when He walked through walls:

John 20:19 On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

John 20:26 Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, "Peace be with you."

The objection, that Christ came forth from the closed sepulchre, and came in to his disciples while the doors were shut (Mt. 28:6; John 20:19), gives no better support to their error. For as the water, just as if it had been a solid pavement, furnished a path to our Saviour when he walked on it (Mt. 14), so it is not strange that the hard stone yielded to his step; although it is more probable that the stone was removed at his command, and forthwith, after giving him a passage, returned to its place. To enter while the doors were shut, was not so much to penetrate through solid matter, as to make a passage for himself by divine power, and stand in the midst of his disciples in a most miraculous manner. (IV, 17:29)

What's the *difference*? This is a distinction with no logical difference (the illusory *appearance* of strength of argument):

Proposition: "enter while the doors were shut".

Description #1: "not so much to penetrate through solid matter"

Description #2: "make a passage for himself by divine power ... in a most miraculous manner."

Calvin approves of the positive assertion #2 and contends that it is different from the negative claim of #1, that he objects to. But how are the two essentially different? Calvin has been arguing all along that Jesus is somehow limited by the laws of nature and matter. But He had a body when He walked through walls. He was not merely a spirit.

Therefore it has to be explained how He did this. We know He did. And if He *did*, then He has already greatly transcended the limitations of matter.

They gain nothing by quoting the passage from Luke, in which it is said, that Christ suddenly vanished from the eyes of the disciples, with whom he had journeyed to Emmaus (Luke 24:31). In withdrawing from their sight, he did not become invisible: he only disappeared. (IV, 17:29)

Here is yet another distinction without a difference; this, too, was a physical Christ, after the resurrection.

Thus Luke declares that, on the journeying with them, he did not assume a new form, but that “their eyes were holden.” But these men not only transform Christ that he may live on the earth, but pretend that there is another elsewhere of a different description. In short, by thus trifling, they, not in direct terms indeed, but by a circumlocution, make a spirit of the flesh of Christ; and, not contented with this, give him properties altogether opposite. Hence it necessarily follows that he must be twofold. (IV, 17:29)

Jesus is omnipotent. God the Father is omnipotent. That is all that is strictly necessary for the Eucharist to be *possible*. The indication that it is *in fact* a reality is in Scripture. The *plausibility* of this state of affairs is indicated by the dozens of biblical analogies we have seen. The implausibility of the contrary (Calvin’s position) is shown in the logical and scriptural counter-indications to them at every turn.

They are greatly mistaken in imagining that there is no presence of the flesh of Christ in the Supper, unless it be placed in the bread. They thus leave nothing for the secret operation of the Spirit, which unites Christ himself to us. (IV, 17:31)

Christ's flesh is present by "the secret operation of the Spirit" but couldn't *possibly* be under the appearance of bread? If the former is possible, why not the latter? Jesus explicitly taught that what was bread would somehow become His actual Body.

Christ does not seem to them to be present unless he descends to us, as if we did not equally gain his presence when he raises us to himself. (IV, 17:31)

But we are not really bodily present in heaven. For Calvin, that is possible during holy communion, but it is not possible for Jesus to be bodily present again on the earth in a eucharistic fashion. We can only magically travel up to heaven: Calvin finds this ultra-odd scenario quite plausible and biblical. Perhaps we Catholics can be forgiven if we do not.

Now, should any one ask me as to the mode, I will not be ashamed to confess that it is too high a mystery either for my mind to comprehend or my words to express; and to speak more plainly, I rather feel than understand it. (IV, 17:32)

Then why does he go on and on if he himself admits that he can't "comprehend" it or put it into words?

Hence has arisen that false interpretation of sacramental eating, because it was imagined that even the wicked and profane, however much alienated from Christ, eat his body. But the very flesh of Christ in the mystery of the Supper is no less a spiritual matter than eternal salvation. Whence we infer, that all who are devoid of the Spirit of Christ can no more eat the flesh of Christ than drink wine that has no savour.... we nowhere read that they bring death upon themselves by receiving Christ unworthily, but by rejecting him.... They object, that Paul could not have made them guilty of the body and blood of the Lord if they had not partaken of them (1 Cor. 11:7); I answer, that they were not condemned for having eaten. but only for having profaned the ordinance by trampling under foot the pledge, which they ought to have reverently received, the pledge of sacred union with God. (IV, 17:33)

So Jesus can be present or not present, as if He were a phantom Who beckons to the whim and fancy of conjurers, who determine whether He

will be present or not, by their faith or lack thereof. The Bible teaches precisely the *opposite*.

St. Paul doesn't say that those who receive holy communion irreverently do not receive Jesus at all, but rather, that they "will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Cor 11:27) and that "anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself" (1 Cor 11:29). Paul didn't talk about a pledge, or profaning an ordinance, but of profaning the body and blood of Jesus: a completely different notion.

In seeking to prepare for eating worthily, men have often dreadfully harassed and tortured miserable consciences, and yet have in no degree attained the end. They have said that those *eat worthily* who are in a state of grace. *Being in a state of grace*, they have interpreted to be pure and free from all sin. By this definition, all the men that ever have been, and are upon the earth, were debarred from the use of this sacrament.... For if the Lord, by his prohibition, admits none to partake of his Supper but the righteous and innocent, every man would require to be cautious before feeling secure of that righteousness of his own which he is told that God requires. (IV, 17:41)

We teach that a man must be free from all *mortal* sin (rather than all sin, period): a crucial distinction. This is a classic example of how foolishly Calvin caricatures opposing positions.

2. Calvin vs. the Church Fathers on the Eucharist

It is strange that they have fallen into such a degree of ignorance, nay, of stupor, as to produce this monstrous fiction not only against Scripture, but also against the consent of the ancient Church. I admit, indeed, that some of the ancients occasionally used the term *conversion*, not that they meant to do away with the substance in the external signs, but to teach that the bread devoted to the sacrament was widely different from ordinary bread, and was now something else. All clearly and uniformly teach that the sacred Supper consists of two parts, an earthly and a heavenly. The earthly they without dispute interpret to be bread and wine. Certainly, whatever they may pretend, it is plain that antiquity,

which they often dare to oppose to the clear word of God, gives no countenance to that dogma. It is not so long since it was devised; indeed, it was unknown not only to the better ages, in which a purer doctrine still flourished, but after that purity was considerably impaired. There is no early Christian writer who does not admit in distinct terms that the sacred symbols of the Supper are bread and wine, although, as has been said, they sometimes distinguish them by various epithets, in order to recommend the dignity of the mystery. (IV, 17:14)

Nay, if the nature of the mystery, as delivered to us, and known to the ancient Church for four hundred years, had been considered as it deserves, there was more than enough to satisfy us; the door would have been shut against many disgraceful errors. These have kindled up fearful dissensions, by which the Church, both anciently and in our own times, ... (IV, 17:33)

In the age of Bernard, though a harsher mode of speech had prevailed, transubstantiation was not yet recognised. And in all previous ages, the similitude in the mouths of all was, that a spiritual reality was conjoined with bread and wine in this sacrament. (IV, 17:15)

You may make your choice of these definitions, which in meaning differ not from that of Augustine, which defines a sacrament to be a visible sign of a sacred thing, or a visible form of an invisible grace, but does not contain a better or surer explanation. (IV, 14:1)

Lest any one should despise this as a novel invention, the view which Augustine took and expressed was the same: "Had not the sacraments a certain resemblance to the things of which they are sacraments, they would not be sacraments at all. And from this resemblance, they generally have the names of the things themselves. This, as the sacrament of the body of Christ, is, after a certain manner, the body of Christ, and the sacrament of Christ is the blood of Christ; so the sacrament of faith is faith" (August. Ep. 23, ad Bonifac.). He has many similar passages, which it would be superfluous to collect, as that one may suffice. I need only remind my readers, that the same doctrine is taught by that holy man in his Epistle to Evodius. Where Augustine

teaches that nothing is more common than metonymy in mysteries, it is a frivolous quibble to object that there is no mention of the Supper. (IV, 17:21)

St. Augustine certainly thought (vastly unlike Calvin) that the Holy Eucharist was the actual Body and Blood of Christ, to be adored, and that it imparted grace and salvation:

He took flesh from the flesh of Mary ... and gave us the same flesh to be eaten unto salvation ... we do sin by not adoring.

(Explanations of the Psalms, 98, 9)

Not only is no one forbidden to take as food the Blood of this Sacrifice, rather, all who wish to possess life are exhorted to drink thereof.

(Questions of the Hepateuch, 3, 57)

For not all bread, but only that which receives the blessing of Christ, becomes Christ's body.

(Sermons, 234, 2)

The very same thing is said by Chrysostom, "Christ makes us his body, not by faith only, but in reality." He does not mean that we obtain this blessing from any other quarter than from faith: he only intends to prevent any one from thinking of mere imagination when he hears the name of faith. (IV, 17:6)

For St. Augustine, as with our Lord Jesus, there was no necessary antithesis or rigid distinction between "sign" and "reality". The Bible itself confirms this. For example, Jesus refers to the "sign of Jonah," comparing Jonah's time in the belly of the fish to His own burial (Mt 12:38–40). In other words, both events, although described as "signs," were literally real events. Jesus also uses the same terminology in connection with His second coming (Mt 24:30–31): also a literal, not symbolic, occurrence.

J. N. D. Kelly, a highly respected Protestant scholar of early Church doctrine and development, writing about patristic views in the fourth and fifth centuries, concurs:

It must not be supposed, of course, that this 'symbolical' language implied that the bread and wine were regarded as mere pointers to, or tokens of, absent realities. Rather were they accepted as signs of realities which were somehow actually present though apprehended by faith alone.

(*Early Christian Doctrines*, revised edition, 1978, San Francisco: Harper Collins, 442)

About St. Augustine in particular, Kelly concludes:

There are certainly passages in his writings which give a superficial justification to all these interpretations, but a balanced verdict must agree that he accepted the current realism ... One could multiply texts ... which show Augustine taking for granted the traditional identification of the elements with the sacred body and blood. There can be no doubt that he shared the realism held by almost all his contemporaries and predecessors.

(*Ibid.*, 446–447)

Likewise, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* makes the same point about allusions to “symbolism” with regard to the general teaching of the Church Fathers:

Even where the elements were spoken of as 'symbols' or 'antitypes' there was no intention of denying the reality of the Presence in the gifts.

(Second edition, edited by F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, Oxford University Press, 1983, 475)

J. N. D. Kelly notes the same general motif in Tertullian's teaching:

Occasionally these writers use language which has been held to imply that, for all its realist sound, their use of the terms 'body' and 'blood' may after all be merely symbolical. Tertullian, for example, refers [E.g. *C. Marc.* 3,19; 4,40] to the bread as 'a figure' (*figura*) of Christ's body, and once speaks [*Ibid* 1,14: cf. Hippolytus, *apost. trad.* 32, 3] of 'the bread by which He represents (*repraesentat*) His very body'. Yet we should be cautious about interpreting such expressions in a modern

fashion. According to ancient modes of thought a mysterious relationship existed between the thing symbolized and its symbol, figure or type; the symbol in some sense *was* the thing symbolized. Again, the verb *repraesentare*, in Tertullian's vocabulary [Cf. *ibid* 4,22; *de monog.* 10], retained its original significance of 'to make present.' All that his language really suggests is that, while accepting the equation of the elements with the body and blood, he remains conscious of the sacramental distinction between them. In fact, he is trying, with the aid of the concept of *figura*, to rationalize to himself the apparent contradiction between (a) the dogma that the elements are now Christ's body and blood, and (b) the empirical fact that for sensation they remain bread and wine.

(*Early Christian Doctrines*, Harper SanFrancisco, 1978, 212)

Here are further examples in the Bible of a "sign" being a real thing; not merely a representation of something else:

Matthew 24:30 then will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory;

Matthew 26:48 Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I shall kiss is the man; seize him."

Mark 13:3–8 And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, [4] "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign when these things are all to be accomplished?" [5] And Jesus began to say to them, "Take heed that no one leads you astray. [6] Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. [7] And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is not yet. [8] For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places, there will be famines; this is but the beginning of the birth-pangs.

Mark 16:17 [disputed biblical text] And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; (cf. 16:20)

Luke 2:12 And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.

Luke 11:30 For as Jonah became a sign to the men of Nin'evah, so will the Son of man be to this generation.

John 2:11 This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

John 2:23 Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs which he did;

John 3:2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him."

John 4:54 This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee. [i.e., healing a man's son]

John 6:2 And a multitude followed him, because they saw the signs which he did on those who were diseased. (cf. 6:14, 26, 30; 7:31; 9:16; 10:41; 11:47; 12:18, 37; 20:30)

Acts 2:22 Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—

Acts 2:43 ... many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. (cf. 4:16, 22, 30; 5:12; 6:8; 7:36; 8:6, 13; 14:3; 15:12)

Romans 15:19 by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Holy Spirit, so that from Jerusalem and as far round as Illyr'icum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ, (cf. 2 Cor 12:12; Heb 2:4)

Since the advocates of this spurious dogma are not ashamed to honour it with the suffrages of the ancients, and especially of Augustine, how perverse they are in the attempt I will briefly explain. Pious and learned men have collected the passages, and therefore I am unwilling to plead a concluded cause: any one who wishes may consult their writings. I will not even collect from Augustine what might be pertinent to the matter, but will be contented to show briefly, that without all controversy he is

wholly ours. The pretence of our opponents, when they would wrest him from us, that throughout his works the flesh and blood of Christ are said to be dispensed in the Supper—namely, the victim once offered on the cross, is frivolous, seeing he, at the same time, calls it either the eucharist or sacrament of the body. But it is unnecessary to go far to find the sense in which he uses the terms *flesh* and *blood*, since he himself explains, saying (Ep. 23, ad Bonif.) that the sacraments receive names from their similarity to the things which they designate; and that, therefore, the sacrament of the body is after a certain manner the body. With this agrees another well-known passage, “The Lord hesitated not to say, This is my body, when he gave the sign” (Cont. Adimant. Manich. cap. 12). They again object that Augustine says distinctly that the body of Christ falls upon the earth, and enters the mouth. But this is in the same sense in which he affirms that it is consumed, for he conjoins both at the same time. There is nothing repugnant to this in his saying that the bread is consumed after the mystery is performed: for he had said a little before, “As these things are known to men, when they are done by men they may receive honour as being religious, but not as being wonderful” (De Trinit. Lib. 3 c. 10). (IV, 17:28)

Calvin cites the following sentence from St. Augustine’s *On the Trinity*, Book III, chapter 10, section 20:

But because these things are known to men, in that they are done by men, they may well meet with reverence as being holy things, but they cannot cause wonder as being miracles.

But in the next section (chapter 10, section 21), Augustine draws the same analogy to God appearing in physical things, that I used (earlier in this chapter) in this respect:

What man, again, knows how the angels made or took those clouds and fires in order to signify the message they were bearing, even if we supposed that the Lord or the Holy Spirit was manifested in those corporeal forms? Just as infants do not know of that which is placed upon the altar and consumed after the performance of the holy celebration, whence or in what manner it is made, or whence it is taken for religious use. And if they were never to learn from their own

experience or that of others, and never to see that species of thing except during the celebration of the sacrament, when it is being offered and given; and if it were told them by the most weighty authority whose body and blood it is; they will believe nothing else, except that the Lord absolutely appeared in this form to the eyes of mortals, and that that liquid actually flowed from the piercing of a side which resembled this.

St. Augustine—contra Calvin—casually assumes that it is the Body and Blood of Christ.

His meaning is not different in the passage which our opponents too rashly appropriate to themselves—viz. that Christ in a manner carried himself in his own hands, when he held out the mystical bread to his disciples. For by interposing the expression, *in a manner*, he declares that he was not really or truly included under the bread. (IV, 17:28)

Calvin seizes upon one word, to supposedly turn the issue in his favor, but in this exposition on Psalm 34, St. Augustine makes it clear many times that he literally believes in the physical presence of Christ. He refers to the sacrifice of the mass:

Because there was there a sacrifice after the order of Aaron, and afterwards He of His Own Body and Blood appointed a sacrifice after the order of Melchizedek ... (1)

He assumes throughout a striking literal eucharistic realism:

For very humility taught our Lord in His Own Body and Blood: because when He commends His Own Body and Blood, He commends His Humility ... (3)

Or rather some spiritual Christian invites us to approach to our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. But let us approach to Him and be lightened; not as the Jews approached to Him, that they might be darkened; for they approached to Him that they might crucify Him: let us approach to Him that we may receive His Body and Blood. They by Him crucified were darkened; we by eating and drinking The Crucified are lightened. (9)

Now will He speak openly of the same Sacrament, whereby He was carried in His Own Hands. O taste and see that the Lord is good Psalm 33:8. Does not the Psalm now open itself, and show you that seeming insanity and constant madness, the same insanity and sober inebriety of that David, who in a figure showed I know not what, when in the person of king Achis they said to him, How is it? When the Lord said, Except a man eat My Flesh and drink My Blood, he shall have no life in him? John 6:53 And they in whom reigned Achis, that is, error and ignorance, said; what said they? How can this man give us his flesh to eat? John 6:52 If you are ignorant, Taste and see that the Lord is good: but if you understand not, you are king Achis: David shall change His Countenance and shall depart from you, and shall quit you, and shall depart. (11; complete)

Despite all this, Calvin seizes on one word (“sign”) and thinks that it proves his case over against Catholicism and the thoroughly Catholic St. Augustine. He constantly does this, by presenting highly selective facts to the exclusion of other equally relevant facts in context.

St. John Chrysostom has a realist view that Calvin moves away from, while continuing to cite these fathers as on his side (by a selective presentation). Anglican patristic scholar J. N. D. Kelly writes of his eucharistic views:

While admitting that the spiritual gift can be apprehended only by the eyes of the mind and not by sense, Chrysostom exploits the materialist implications of the conversion theory to the full ... Thus the elements have undergone a change, and Chrysostom describes them as being refashioned or transformed. In the fifth century conversionist views were taken for granted by Alexandrians and Antiochenes alike.... [*In prod. Iud. hom.* I, 6; *in Matt. hom.* 82, 5]

(*Early Christian Doctrines*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, fifth revised edition, 1978, 443–444)

St. John Chrysostom believed that the bread and wine change into His Body and Blood:

Christ is present. The One who prepared that [Holy Thursday] table is the very One who now prepares this [altar] table. For it is not a man who makes the sacrificial gifts become the Body and Blood of Christ, but He that was crucified for us, Christ Himself. The priest stands there carrying out the action, but the power and grace is of God. "This is My Body," he says. This statement transforms the gifts.

(*Homilies on the Treachery of Judas*, 1, 6)

Protestant historians Philip Schaff and Jaroslav Pelikan summarize the fathers' views:

The Catholic church, both Greek and Latin, sees in the Eucharist not only a *sacramentum*, in which God communicates a grace to believers, but at the same time, and in fact mainly, a *sacrificium*, in which believers really offer to God that which is represented by the sensible elements. For this view also the church fathers laid the foundation, and it must be conceded they stand in general far more on the Greek and Roman Catholic than on the Protestant side of this question.

(Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Volume III, § 96. "The Sacrifice of the Eucharist")

In general, this period, ... was already very strongly inclined toward the doctrine of transubstantiation, and toward the Greek and Roman sacrifice of the mass, which are inseparable in so far as a real sacrifice requires the real presence of the victim ...

(*Ibid.*, § 95. "The Sacrament of the Eucharist", p. 500)

Theodore [c.350–428] set forth the doctrine of the real presence, and even a theory of sacramental transformation of the elements, in highly explicit language ... "At first it is laid upon the altar as a mere bread and wine mixed with water, but by the coming of the Holy Spirit it is transformed into body and blood, and thus it is changed into the power of a spiritual and immortal nourishment." [Hom. catech. 16,36] these and similar passages in Theodore are an indication that the twin ideas of the transformation of the eucharistic elements and the transformation of the communicant were so widely held and so firmly

established in the thought and language of the church that everyone had to acknowledge them.

(Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100–600)*, Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1971, 236–237)

Since Calvin insists that the fathers agree with him on this matter, I will now document that they do not; that transubstantiation in kernel form (not yet fully developed, as in the case of all complex doctrines, such as the Holy Trinity and Christology) was indeed taught by many fathers, just as historian Philip Schaff (no fan of the doctrine at all) verified:

St. Irenaeus

When, therefore, the mingled cup and the manufactured bread receives the Word of God, and the Eucharist of the blood and the body of Christ is made, from which things the substance of our flesh is increased and supported, how can they affirm that the flesh is incapable of receiving the gift of God, which is life eternal, which [flesh] is nourished from the body and blood of the Lord, and is a member of Him?—even as the blessed Paul declares in his Epistle to the Ephesians, that “we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.” He does not speak these words of some spiritual and invisible man, for a spirit has not bones nor flesh; but [he refers to] that dispensation [by which the Lord became] an actual man, consisting of flesh, and nerves, and bones,—that [flesh] which is nourished by the cup which is His blood, and receives increase from the bread which is His body.

(*Against Heresies*, V, 2, 3; ANF, Vol. I)

Origen

You are accustomed to take part in the divine mysteries, so you know how, when you have received the Body of the Lord, you reverently exercise care lest a particle fall, and lest anything of the consecrated gift perish.... But if you observe such caution in keeping His Body, and properly so, how is it that you think neglecting the word of God a lesser crime than neglecting His Body?

(*Homilies on Exodus*, 13, 3)

St. Cyprian

And therefore we ask that our bread—that is, Christ—may be given to us daily, that we who abide and live in Christ may not depart from His sanctification and body.

(*On the Lord's Prayer* / Treatise IV, 18; ANF, Vol. V)

St. Athanasius

You will see the Levites bringing loaves and a cup of wine, and placing them on the table. So long as the prayers and invocations have not yet been made, it is mere bread and a mere cup. But when the great and wondrous prayers have been recited, then the bread becomes the body and the cup the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.... When the great prayers and holy supplications are sent up, the Word descends on the bread and the cup, and it becomes His body.

(*Sermon to the Newly-Baptized*)

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

For as the Bread and Wine of the Eucharist before the invocation of the Holy and Adorable Trinity were simple bread and wine, while after the invocation the Bread becomes the Body of Christ, and the Wine the Blood of Christ ...

(*Catechetical Lecture XIX*, 7; NPNF 2, Vol. VII)

Since then He Himself declared and said of the Bread, *This is My Body*, who shall dare to doubt any longer? And since He has Himself affirmed and said, *This is My Blood*, who shall ever hesitate, saying, that it is not His blood?

(*Catechetical Lecture XXII*, 1; NPNF 2, Vol. VII)

Wherefore with full assurance let us partake as of the Body and Blood of Christ: for in the figure of Bread is given to thee His Body, and in the figure of Wine His Blood; that thou by partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, mayest be made of the same body and the same blood with Him.

For thus we come to bear Christ in us, because His Body and Blood are distributed through our members; thus it is that, according to the blessed Peter, *we become partakers of the divine nature*.

(Catechetical Lecture XXII, 3; NPNF 2, Vol. VII)

Consider therefore the Bread and the Wine not as bare elements, for they are, according to the Lord's declaration, the Body and Blood of Christ; for even though sense suggests this to thee, yet let faith establish thee. Judge not the matter from the taste, but from faith be fully assured without misgiving, that the Body and Blood of Christ have been vouchsafed to thee.

(Catechetical Lecture XXII, 6; NPNF 2, Vol. VII)

Having learnt these things, and been fully assured that the seeming bread is not bread, though sensible to taste, but the Body of Christ; and that the seeming wine is not wine, though the taste will have it so, but the Blood of Christ.

(Catechetical Lecture XXII, 9; NPNF 2, Vol. VII)

Then having sanctified ourselves by these spiritual Hymns, we beseech the merciful God to send forth His Holy Spirit upon the gifts lying before Him; that He may make the Bread the Body of Christ, and the Wine the Blood of Christ; for whatsoever the Holy Ghost has touched, is surely sanctified and changed.

(Catechetical Lecture XXIII, 7–8; NPNF 2, Vol. VII)

St. Gregory of Nyssa

Rightly, then, do we believe that now also the bread which is consecrated by the Word of God is changed into the Body of God the Word.... Since, then, that God-containing flesh partook for its substance and support of this particular nourishment also, and since the God who was manifested infused Himself into perishable humanity for this purpose, viz. that by this communion with Deity mankind might at the same time be deified, for this end it is that, by dispensation of His *grace*, He disseminates Himself in every believer through that flesh, whose substance comes from bread and wine, blending Himself with the bodies of believers, to secure that, by this union with the immortal, man, too, may be a sharer in incorruption. He

gives these gifts by virtue of the benediction through which He transelements the natural quality of these visible things to that immortal thing.

(The Great Catechism, chapter XXXVII; NPNF 2, Vol. IV)

St. Ambrose

We observe, then, that grace has more power than nature, and yet so far we have only spoken of the grace of a prophet's blessing. But if the blessing of man had such power as to change nature, what are we to say of that divine consecration where the very words of the Lord and Saviour operate? For that sacrament which you receive is made what it is by the word of Christ. But if the word of Elijah had such power as to bring down fire from heaven, shall not the word of Christ have power to change the nature of the elements? You read concerning the making of the whole world: "He spake and they were made, He commanded and they were created." Shall not the word of Christ, which was able to make out of nothing that which was not, be able to change things which already are into what they were not? For it is not less to give a new nature to things than to change them.

But why make use of arguments? Let us use the examples He gives, and by the example of the Incarnation prove the truth of the mystery. Did the course of nature proceed as usual when the Lord Jesus was born of Mary? If we look to the usual course, a woman ordinarily conceives after connection with a man. And this body which we make is that which was born of the Virgin. Why do you seek the order of nature in the Body of Christ, seeing that the Lord Jesus Himself was born of a Virgin, not according to nature? It is the true Flesh of Christ which crucified and buried, this is then truly the Sacrament of His Body.

The Lord Jesus Himself proclaims: "This is My Body." Before the blessing of the heavenly words another nature is spoken of, after the consecration the Body is signified. He Himself speaks of His Blood. Before the consecration it has another name, after it is called Blood.

(On the Mysteries, Chapter IX, 50, 52–55; NPNF 2, Vol. X)

St. Cyril of Alexandria

He states demonstratively: “This is My Body,” and “This is My Blood” (Mt. 26:26–28) “lest you might suppose the things that are seen as a figure. Rather, by some secret of the all-powerful God the things seen are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ, truly offered in a sacrifice in which we, as participants, receive the life-giving and sanctifying power of Christ.

(Commentary on Matthew [Mt. 26:27])

St. John Chrysostom

Christ is present. The One who prepared that [Holy Thursday] table is the very One who now prepares this [altar] table. For it is not a man who makes the sacrificial gifts become the Body and Blood of Christ, but He that was crucified for us, Christ Himself. The priest stands there carrying out the action, but the power and *grace* is of God. “This is My Body,” he says. This statement transforms the gifts.

(*Homilies on the Treachery of Judas*, 1, 6)

3. Calvin vs. Luther on the Real Presence in the Eucharist

Calvin didn’t think much of Martin Luther’s retention of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist:

[I]f Luther has so great a lust of victory, he will never be able to join along with us in a sincere agreement respecting the pure truth of God. For he has sinned against it not only from vainglory and abusive language, but also from ignorance and the grossest extravagance. For what absurdities he pawned upon us in the beginning, when he said the bread is the very body! And if now he imagines that the body of Christ is enveloped by the bread, I judge that he is chargeable with a very foul error. What can I say of the partisans of that cause? Do they not romance more wildly than Marcion respecting the body of Christ?...

(Letter to Martin Bucer, January 12, 1538; in John Dillenberger, editor, *John Calvin: Selections From His Writings*, Garden City, New York:

Doubleday & Co. / Anchor Books, 1971, p. 47. This letter was translated by Marcus Robert Gilchrist)

In their madness they even drew idolatry after them. For what else is the adorable sacrament of Luther but an idol set up in the temple of God?

(Letter to Martin Bucer, June 1549; in Jules Bonnet, editor, *Selected Works of John Calvin: Tracts and Letters: Letters, Part 2, 1545–1553*, volume 5 of 7; translated by David Constable; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983; reproduction of *Letters of John Calvin*, volume II [Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1858], 234)

Calvin even went so far as to refer to Lutheranism as “evil”:

I am carefully on the watch that Lutheranism gain no ground, nor be introduced into France. The best means, believe me, for checking *the evil* would be that confession written by me ...

(Letter to Heinrich Bullinger, July 2, 1563; in Dillenberger, *ibid.*, 76)

Luther had a quite different take on the eucharistic words in Jesus’ Last Supper discourse:

[S]ince we are confronted by God’s words, “This is my body”—distinct, clear, common, definite words, which certainly are no trope, either in Scripture or in any language—we must embrace them with faith ... not as hairsplitting sophistry dictates but as God says them for us, we must repeat these words after him and hold to them.

(*Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper*, 1528; in Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, translated by Robert C. Schultz, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966, 390)

Luther was right in this respect (though he held that the bread and wine also remained after consecration, and rejected the sacrifice of the mass). Calvin, Zwingli, and the Anabaptists were the radical innovators with regard to eucharistic theology.

4. Calvin and Berengarius’ Eucharistic Errors

Here Satan has employed all his wiles, withdrawing the minds of men from heaven, and imbuing them with the perverse error that Christ is annexed to the element of bread. And, first, we are not to dream of such a presence of Christ in the sacrament as the artificers of the Romish court have imagined, as if the body of Christ, locally present, were to be taken into the hand, and chewed by the teeth, and swallowed by the throat. This was the form of Palinode, which Pope Nicholas dictated to Berengarius, in token of his repentance, a form expressed in terms so monstrous, that the author of the Gloss exclaims, that there is danger, if the reader is not particularly cautious, that he will be led by it into a worse heresy than was that of Berengarius (Distinct. 2 c. Ego Berengarius). (IV, 17:12)

Berengarius of Tours (c. 1010–1088) was one of the few men of any note in the entire patristic and early medieval period who questioned the real presence and transubstantiation; hence we see Calvin immediately gravitating to him, even before he engages in his usual pretense that St. Augustine supposedly would agree with his novel position. In the article on Berengarius in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, we can see from whence Calvin got some of his non-traditional notions of the Eucharist:

In the Eucharistic controversy of the ninth century, Radbert Paschasius, afterwards abbot of Corbie, in his *De Corpore et Sanguine Domini* (831), had maintained the doctrine that in the Holy Eucharist the bread is converted into the real body of Christ, into the very body which was born of Mary and crucified. Ratramnus, a monk of the same abbey, defended the opinion that in the Holy Eucharist there is no conversion of the bread; that the body of Christ is, nevertheless, present, but in a spiritual way; that it is not therefore the same as that born of Mary and crucified. John Scotus Erigena had supported the view that the sacraments of the altar are figures of the body of Christ; that they are a memorial of the true body and blood of Christ. (P. Batiffol, *Etudes d'histoire et de théologie positive*, 2d series, Paris, 1905.)

Unlike Calvin, Berengarius waffled and vacillated, but like Calvin, he went his own way over against Rome. As the article proceeds in its

analysis, we see again the similarities: particularly the notion of merely “spiritual presence”:

At the Council of Tours (1055), presided over by the papal legate Hildebrand, Berengarius signed a profession of faith wherein he confessed that after consecration the bread and wine are truly the body and blood of Christ. At another council held in Rome in 1059, Berengarius was present, retracted his opinions, and signed a formula of faith, drawn up by Cardinal Humbert, affirming the real and sensible presence of the true body of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. (Mansi, XIX, 900.) On his return, however, Berengarius attacked this formula. Eusebius Bruno abandoned him, and the Count of Anjou, Geoffrey the Bearded, vigorously opposed him. Berengarius appealed to Pope Alexander II, who, though he intervened in his behalf, asked him to renounce his erroneous opinions. This Berengarius contemptuously refused to do.... in 1078, by order of Pope Gregory VII, he came to Rome, and in a council held in St. John Lateran signed a profession of faith affirming the conversion of the bread into the body of Christ, born of the Virgin Mary. The following year, in a council held in the same place Berengarius signed a formula affirming the same doctrine in a more explicit way. Gregory VII then recommended him to the bishops of Tours and Angers, forbidding that any penalty should be inflicted on him or that anyone should call him a heretic. Berengarius, on his return, again attacked the formula he had signed, but as a consequence of the Council of Bordeaux (1080) he made a final retraction. He then retired into solitude on the island of St. Cosme, where he died, in union with the Church.

In order to understand his opinion, we must observe that, in philosophy, Berengarius had rationalistic tendencies and was a nominalist. Even in the study of the question of faith, he held that reason is the best guide. Reason, however, is dependent upon and is limited by sense-perception. Authority, therefore, is not conclusive; we must reason according to the data of our senses. There is no doubt that Berengarius denied transubstantiation (we mean the substantial conversion expressed by the word; the word itself was used for the first time by Hildebert of Lavardin); it is not absolutely certain that he

denied the Real Presence, though he certainly held false views regarding it. Is the body of Christ present in the Eucharist, and in what manner? On this question the authorities appealed to by Berengarius are, besides Scotus Erigena, St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, and St. Augustine. These fathers taught that the Sacrament of the Altar is the figure, the sign, the token of the body and blood of the Lord. These terms, in their mind, apply directly to what is external and sensible in the Holy Eucharist and do not, in any way, imply the negation of the real presence of the true body of Christ. (St. Aug. Serm. 143, n.3; Gerbert, Libellus De Corp. et Sang. Domini. n. 4, P.L., CXXXIX, 177.) For Berengarius the body and blood of Christ are really present in the Holy Eucharist; but this presence is an intellectual or spiritual presence. The substance of the bread and the substance of the wine remain unchanged in their nature, but by consecration they become spiritually the very body and blood of Christ. This spiritual body and blood of Christ is the *res sacramenti*; the bread and the wine are the figure, the sign, the token, *sacramentum*....

He maintained that the bread and wine, without any change in their nature, become by consecration the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, a memorial of the body crucified and of the blood shed on the cross. It is not, however, the body of Christ as it is in heaven; for how could the body of Christ which is now in heaven, necessarily limited by space, be in another place, on several altars, and in numerous hosts? Yet the bread and the wine are the sign of the actual and real presence of the body and blood of Christ.

Calvin, too, had pronounced rationalistic and nominalistic tendencies; we see some of that intellectual background here.

5. Calvin vs. the Bible on the Sacrifice of the Mass

The Lord cannot forget himself, and it is long since he declared that nothing is so offensive to him as to be worshipped by human inventions. Hence those celebrated declarations of the Prophets, which ought continually to ring in our ears, "I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices; but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and

ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you” (Jer. 7:22, 23). “I earnestly protested unto your fathers, in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, even unto this day, rising early and protesting, saying, Obey my voice” (Jer. 11:7). There are other passages of the same kind, but the most noted of all is, “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry” (1 Sam. 15:22, 23). It is easy, therefore, to prove, that whenever human inventions in this respect are defended by the authority of the Church, they cannot be vindicated from the charge of impiety, and that the name of Church is falsely assumed. (IV, 10:17)

According to this rule, we should rather have adored him spiritually in the heavenly glory, than devised that perilous species of adoration replete with gross and carnal ideas of God. Those, therefore, who devised the adoration of the sacrament, not only dreamed it of themselves, without any authority from Scripture, where no mention of it can be shown (it would not have been omitted, had it been agreeable to God); but, disregarding Scripture, forsook the living God, and fabricated a god for themselves, after the lust of their own hearts. For what is idolatry if it is not to worship the gifts instead of the giver? (IV, 17:36)

By these and similar inventions, Satan has attempted to adulterate and envelop the sacred Supper of Christ as with thick darkness, that its purity might not be preserved in the Church. But the head of this horrid abomination was, when he raised a sign by which it was not only obscured and perverted, but altogether obliterated and abolished, vanished away and disappeared from the memory of man—namely, when, with most pestilential error, he blinded almost the whole world into the belief that the Mass was a sacrifice and oblation for obtaining the remission of sins.... when it shall have been most clearly proved by the word of God, that this mass, however glossed and splendid, offers the greatest insult to Christ, suppresses and buries his cross, consigns his death to oblivion, takes away the benefit which it was designed to

convey, enervates and dissipates the sacrament, by which the remembrance of his death was retained, will its roots be so deep that this most powerful axe, the word of God, will not cut it down and destroy it? (IV, 18:1)

They must either prove God to be the author and founder of their priesthood, or confess that there is no honour from God in an office, into which, without being called, they have rushed with wicked temerity. They cannot produce one iota of Scripture in support of their priesthood. And must not the sacrifices be vain, since they cannot be offered without a priest? (IV, 18:9)

We deny that they are priests in this sense—namely, that by such oblations they intercede with God for the people, that by propitiating God they make expiation for sins. Christ is the only Pontiff and Priest of the New Testament: to him all priestly offices were transferred, and in him they closed and terminated. Even had Scripture made no mention of the eternal priesthood of Christ, yet, as God, after abolishing those ancient sacrifices, appointed no new priest, the argument of the apostle remains invincible, “No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron” (Heb. 5:4). How, then, can those sacrilegious men, who by their own account are murderers of Christ, dare to call themselves the priests of the living God? (IV, 18:14)

What remains but for the blind to see, the deaf to hear, children even to perceive this abomination of the mass, which, held forth in a golden cup, has so intoxicated all the kings and nations of the earth, from the highest to the lowest; so struck them with stupor and giddiness, that, duller than the lower animals, they have placed the vessel of their salvation in this fatal vortex. Certainly Satan never employed a more powerful engine to assail and storm the kingdom of Christ. (IV, 18:18)

There are no “human inventions” from the Catholic Church “in this respect” so it is a non-issue. Calvin simply assumes without argument that the sacrifice of the mass (firmly entrenched in apostolic and patristic tradition) is the equivalent of the sorts of false worship that God condemned in the old covenant. But he cites Scripture out of context.

He is trying to pit burnt-offerings and sacrifices against simple obedience to God, but that was not the point of Jeremiah 7:22–23 and 1 Samuel 15:22–23: which was, rather, that outward ritual is useless if it is not accompanied by inner piety and a right relationship to God, and obedience to Him at all costs.

This is a very common theme in the Old Testament, and Catholics wholeheartedly agree with it. Our notions of inner disposition during worship and examination of conscience are two of the many ways in which the Catholic Church highly stresses inner spirituality in conjunction with ritual and liturgy.

Secondly, the passages in Jeremiah and 1 Samuel couldn't possibly have meant this in the sense of abolition of the Old Testament sacrificial system of temple worship, because it continued even into the new covenant, with Christians (including St. Paul) participating in it and observing all the Jewish feasts (e.g., Jn 4:45; 5:1; 7:1–2, 11, 37; 12:20), including Passover (Matthew 26:17–19; Mk 14:12–16; Lk 22:1–15; Jn 2:13, 23). Jesus did so as well.

Therefore, there was a correct way to sacrifice in worship of God, which was not antithetical to the Old Testament system, but rather, a continuation of it. It was developed in the New Testament as the sacrifice of the mass: Jesus being the Lamb. This is the one-time event at Calvary; not a repetition of killing Jesus over and over, as is often falsely believed by non-Catholics.

The future universality of the priesthood is clearly indicated in the Old Testament:

Isaiah 66:18, 21 For I know their works and their thoughts, and I am coming to gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and shall see my glory, ... And some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites, says the LORD. (cf. 56:3–8)

Zephaniah 3:9–10 Yea, at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call on the name of the LORD and serve him with one accord. [10] From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, the daughter of my dispersed ones, shall bring my offering.

Malachi 1:11 For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering; for my name is great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts. (cf. Jer 33:14–22)

St. Paul also casually assumes that priests are still operative under the New Christian covenant, by referring to the table of the Lord (or altar) and contrasting it with the table of demons, in a eucharistic context:

1 Corinthians 10:14–21 Therefore, my beloved, shun the worship of idols. [15] I speak as to sensible men; judge for yourselves what I say. [16] The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? [17] Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. [18] Consider the people of Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices partners in the altar? [19] What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? [20] No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons. [21] You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. (cf. 9:13)

The same priestly thought-world is indicated in another utterance of his:

Romans 15:15–17 But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God [16] to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. [17] In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God.

What is being offered? The word for “priestly service” is *hierourgeo*. It is defined by *Strong’s Concordance* (word #2418) as “to be a temple-worker, i.e., officiate as a priest (fig.):—minister. Thayer’s *Greek-English Lexicon* states that it meant “to be busied with sacred things; to be perform sacred rites” (from Philo), and “used esp. of persons sacrificing” (from Josephus).

Baptist Greek scholar A. T. Robertson, in his *Word Pictures of the New Testament* (1930), gives a basic definition of “to work in sacred things, to minister as a priest.”

Given the central motif in the New Testament of Jesus as the sacrificial lamb, it stands to reason that the sacrifice of the mass would be associated with the Eucharist, as the central rite of Christian worship. But Calvin again (as so often) illogically equates the *corruption* of a thing with the thing *itself*.

This much, indeed, is most certain,—the cross of Christ is overthrown the moment an altar is erected. (IV, 18:3)

How odd, then, that Paul casually assumes the continued existence of altars among Christians (1 Cor 10:14–21), and that altars are mentioned in the New Testament in other places (apart from the many mentions of altars in heaven), as well:

Hebrews 13:9–12 Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings; for it is well that the heart be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited their adherents. [10] We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. [11] For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. [12] So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.

Therefore, if the cross is overthrown by an altar, then the New Testament is against the cross itself, which is absurd.

We are accustomed to observe the last words of the dying as oracular. Christ, when dying, declares, that by his one sacrifice is perfected and fulfilled whatever was necessary to our salvation. To such a sacrifice, whose perfection he so clearly declared, shall we, as if it were imperfect, presume daily to append innumerable sacrifices? (IV, 18:3)

They are not innumerable sacrifices, but one and the same, brought to us, transcending time (as God does). But there is indeed a New Testament motif (above all, in Paul) of *our* participating in His sacrifice, too, which is not dissimilar to the notion of the mass:

Romans 8:17 and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

2 Corinthians 1:5–7 For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. [6] If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. [7] Our hope for you is unshaken; for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

2 Corinthians 4:10–11 always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. [11] For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Galatians 6:17 Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.

Philippians 3:10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,

Colossians 1:24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church,

2 Timothy 4:6 For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. (cf. 2:10)

1 Peter 4:13 But rejoice in so far as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

Calvin himself elsewhere applies the above teachings to a type of participation in the cross: a thing not all that different from what Catholics believe regarding the sacrifice of the mass:

[B]y fellowship with him he mortifies our earthly members that they may not afterwards exert themselves in action, and kill the old man, that he may not hereafter be in vigour and bring forth fruit. An effect of his burials moreover is that we as his fellows are buried to sin. For when the Apostle says, that we are ingrafted into the likeness of Christ's death and that we are buried with him unto sin, that by his cross the world is crucified unto us and we unto the world, and that we are dead with him, he not only exhorts us to manifest an example of his death, but declares that there is an efficacy in it which should appear in all Christians, if they would not render his death unfruitful and useless. Accordingly in the death and burial of Christ a twofold blessing is set before us—viz. deliverance from death, to which we were enslaved, and the mortification of our flesh (Rom. 6:5; Gal. 2:19, 6:14; Col. 3:3). (II, 16:7)

Calvin also shows that he comprehends a large part of the Catholic understanding of the importance of the mass: the centrality of the cross and Jesus' sacrifice:

Nor is this to be wondered at; for, as another Apostle declares, Christ, "through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God," (Heb. 9:14), and hence that transformation of the cross which were otherwise against its nature. But that these things may take deep root and have their seat in our inmost hearts, we must never lose sight of sacrifice and ablution. For, were not Christ a victim, we could have no sure conviction of his being ... *our substitute-ransom and propitiation*. (II, 16:6)

Since the sacred word of God not only affirms, but proclaims and protests, that this sacrifice was once accomplished, and remains eternally in force, do not those who demand another, charge it with imperfection and weakness? But to what tends the mass which has been established, that a hundred thousand sacrifices may be performed every day, but just to bury and suppress the passion of our Lord, in which he offered himself to his Father as the only victim? Who but a blind man does not see that it was Satanic audacity to oppose a truth so clear and transparent? I am not unaware of the impostures by which the father of

lies is wont to cloak his fraud—viz. that the sacrifices are not different or various, but that the one sacrifice is repeated. Such smoke is easily dispersed. (IV, 18:3)

If Christ is sacrificed at each mass, he must be cruelly slain every moment in a thousand places. This is not my argument, but the apostle's: "Nor yet that he should offer himself often;" "for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world" (Heb. 9:25, 26). I admit that they are ready with an answer, by which they even charge us with calumny; for they say that we object to them what they never thought, and could not even think. We know that the life and death of Christ are not at all in their hand. Whether they mean to slay him, we regard not: our intention is only to show the absurdity consequent on their impious and accursed dogma. (IV, 18:5)

Calvin sets up the straw man of Catholics supposedly sacrificing Jesus over and over. He bashes that, then he steps back and admits that Catholics don't actually believe what he has just (rightly) demolished. But nevertheless he dismisses the Catholic explanation with virtually no argument, as "smoke" deriving from the devil. Rather than bash a straw man and dismiss the actual Catholic argument in a sentence, Calvin ought to interact with our *real* arguments.

He acts as if he knows better than Catholics do, what we believe, and its logical and real-life consequences. It is possible to see a negative logical result or reduction in another system that the proponents do not see (I observe this all the time in critiquing various Protestant errors), but even if that is the case, it is necessary to at least properly *understand* the basic belief before proceeding to critique what is held to be its logical outcomes. Calvin miserably fails that fundamental test.

There is either one sacrifice or there are many. We agree with Calvin and Protestants that there is but one. We contend that the sacrifice of the mass is included in the one: it transcends time. It is not an additional sacrifice. That means (agree with us or disagree) that we do not hold to "many" sacrifices.

Calvin's problem remains having to explain the references to the "table of the Lord" in Paul: to altars. Altars make no sense in his paradigm, because he thinks they are opposed to the cross of Christ. He also has to

explain how it is that an act of God (the crucifixion: an act of Jesus Who is God as well as man) could be in time (insofar as it is an act of God—Jesus in His divine nature—, Who is outside of time).

But Calvin actually proves by his own reasoning the possibility and plausibility of the sacrifice of the mass. It can be demonstrated as following, or at least not being at all inconsistent with his own premises. Here is how it works:

1) What God decrees, and His acts (and one may contend that for God, these are one and the same), are from God's perspective outside of time, or decreed from eternity, because *He* is outside of time. They may intersect with history and be in time in *that* sense, from *our* perspective, but for God they are timeless and "present" (*Institutes*, II, 12:5; III, 21:5; cf. Is 46:9–10; Lam 2:17; 3:37).

2) It was God Who died on the cross, since Jesus Christ is true God and true man; therefore, the sacrifice of the cross was undertaken by God (the Son) Himself, and God (the Father) decreed this from eternity (*Inst.*, II, 12:1, 3; cf. Eph 3:8–11; 2 Tim 1:9).

3) The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross was decreed from eternity (*Inst.*, II, 12:4; cf. Acts 4:26–28; 1 Cor 2:2, 6–8; Eph 1:5–12; 1 Pet 1:18–20).

4) The future can be made, in a sense, "present" to us in prophecy, and in a broader sense, in written revelation itself, since the God Who communicates it to us through a prophet is outside of time, and the future is already present to Him (Is 42:9; 44:7–8; 45:21; 48:3, 5; Acts 2:17; 3:21; 15:18; cf. Sirach 42:19; 48:25).

5) Moreover, God has the ability to allow human beings to be "present" at events from another time, such as St. John's revelation (the entire Book of Revelation). Therefore, He can just as easily decide to make the cross present to Christians, even though to us it is a past event.

6) Therefore, the sacrifice of the cross can be made present to us in the sacrifice of the mass, by God's design and power, and this all follows from explicit arguments from Calvin himself, following his own premises. The timelessness of the mass is indicated by continued biblical references to the "table of the Lord," altars, and the Lamb (Jesus).

Continued sacrifice in the new covenant can only refer to Jesus' death on the cross (especially in light of the book of Hebrews).

7) Moreover, references to Jesus as a *perpetual* high priest (not just a temporary one at the time of His crucifixion: see especially Heb 7:23–25) suggest that the sacrifice is timeless or ongoing: the same notion entailed in the sacrifice of the mass (Heb 2:17–18; 3:1; 4:14–15; 5:5–6, 10; 6:17, 20; 7:14–17, 21–28; 8:1–3; 9:11; 10:21–22).

Thus Paul says, that “Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us,” and bids us “keep the feast” (1 Cor. 5:7, 8). The method, I say, in which the cross of Christ is duly applied to us is when the enjoyment is communicated to us, and we receive it with true faith. (IV, 18:3)

Right there is the sacrifice of the mass in a nutshell, yet Calvin misses it!:

1 Corinthians 5:7–8 Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed. [8] Let us, therefore, celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

John Wesley commented on 5:8 (*Wesley's Notes on the Bible*): “Here is a plain allusion to the Lord's supper, which was instituted in the room of the passover.” That is the essence of the Mass: “Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us, therefore, celebrate the [Lord's supper].”

But it is worth while to hear on what other foundation besides they rear up their sacrifice of the mass. To this end they drag in the prophecy of Malachi, in which the Lord promises that “in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering” (Mal. 1:11). As if it were new or unusual for the prophets, when they speak of the calling of the Gentiles, to designate the spiritual worship of God to which they call them, by the external rites of the law, more familiarly to intimate to the men of their age that they were to be called into the true fellowship of religion, just as in general they are wont to describe the truth which has been exhibited by the gospel by the types of their own age. (IV, 18:4)

This is fair enough, but I would reply by asking, “what are they offering?” It is true that metaphors and symbols are often used in Scripture, but this instance does not appear to be an instance of that. The surrounding context seems quite literal.

If so, it doesn’t work very well to all of a sudden go to a metaphorical interpretation of verse 11. Malachi 1:7 is about “offering polluted food upon my altar.” Verse 8 condemns offering blind, lame, and sick animals. This is real stuff; actual corruptions of religious rites, not metaphor. Malachi 1:10 continues in this vein:

Oh, that there were one among you who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire upon my altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, says the LORD of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand.

Malachi 1:12 contrasts a bad offering with a good one:

But you profane it when you say that the LORD’s table is polluted, and the food for it may be despised.

Verses 13 and 14 continue on with the theme of the Lord’s displeasure over improper offerings.

I come now to the crowning point—viz. that the sacred Supper, on which the Lord left the memorial of his passion formed and engraved, was taken away, hidden, and destroyed, when the mass was erected. While the supper itself is a gift of God, which was to be received with thanksgiving, the sacrifice of the mass pretends to give a price to God to be received as satisfaction. As widely as giving differs from receiving, does sacrifice differ from the sacrament of the Supper. (IV, 18:7)

In fact, they are one and the same: it is a timeless, supernatural, beautiful thing: Jesus’ sacrifice for us made profoundly present, and our receiving Him Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. Calvin also neglects the range of meaning of “remembrance” in Scripture. The Hebrew word *zecher* (in *Strong’s Concordance*, *zakar* or *zeker*: words #2142–2145) does not merely refer to a recollection of past events: it includes the notion of making the past, or eternal truths, a present reality.

Because Calvin lacks the faith in the supernatural and God's transcendence, he can only think of the cross as a past event (whereas to God it is always "now"; therefore, any sense whatever of bringing it to remembrance is, in his mentality, "sacrificing Christ anew." He disregards the timelessness of God (that he himself accepts) and the miraculous nature of what is taking place at every mass. He is stuck in the natural world (which is an odd thing for any Christian to do, given all the supernatural things we believe in).

I hold that private masses are diametrically opposed to the institution of Christ, and are, therefore, an impious profanation of the sacred Supper. For what did the Lord enjoin? Was it not to take and divide amongst ourselves? What does Paul teach as to the observance of this command? Is it not that the breaking of bread is the communion of body and blood? (1 Cor. 10:16). Therefore, when one person takes without distributing, where is the resemblance? (IV, 18:8)

Historically, it would resemble the action of the high priest all along in the holy of holies in the temple or tabernacle (Lev 16:32–34; Heb 9:1–7). Was that invalid, too, because no one else was around? Moses often acted as an intermediary priest in praying for his people (all by himself) and making atonement on their behalf (Ex 32:30–32; Num 14:19–23). His brother Aaron did the same (Num 16:46–48), as did Aaron's grandson Phinehas (Num 25:11–13).

St. Paul, through his penances, undertaken on his own, by God's design, helped save others (Phil 2:17; Col 1:24; 2 Tim 4:6). People pray on their own, so that others can receive grace and benefit (e.g., the prophet Jeremiah). Our Lord Jesus was almost alone (save for his mother, John, and just a few others) on the cross, yet that was the greatest work of redemption of all.

... that carnal adoration which some men have, with perverse temerity, introduced into the sacrament, reasoning thus with themselves: If it his body, then it is also soul and divinity which go along with the body, and cannot be separated from it; and, therefore, Christ must there be adored.... Was it a matter of little moment to worship God under this form without any express injunction? In a matter relating to the true

worship of God, were we thus lightly to act without one word of Scripture? (IV, 17:35)

Let them now go and deny their idolatry when they exhibit the bread in their masses, that it may be adored for Christ. (IV, 18:8)

The worship of Jesus as the sacrificial Lamb in Scripture is also analogous to eucharistic adoration, in its rich Passover imagery:

1 Corinthians 5:7 Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed.

Revelation 5:8; 12–13 And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and with golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints; ... [12] saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” [13] And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all therein, saying, “To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might for ever and ever!”

Revelation 22:3 There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall worship him;

Can we deny that the worship is superstitious when men prostrate themselves before bread that they may therein worship Christ? (IV, 17:36)

Was it also superstition and idolatry when men worshiped God “toward” the temple?:

Psalms 5:7 ... I will worship toward thy holy temple in the fear of thee.

Psalms 28:2 Hear the voice of my supplication, as I cry to thee for help, as I lift up my hands toward thy most holy sanctuary.

Psalms 138:2 I bow down toward thy holy temple and give thanks to thy name for thy steadfast love and thy faithfulness; for thou hast exalted

above everything thy name and thy word.

The honour robbed from God is transferred to the creature, and God, moreover, is dishonoured by the pollution and profanation of his own goodness, while his holy sacrament is converted into an execrable idol. (IV, 17:36)

An idol by definition is an object that is replacement of God in one's heart. Catholics are adoring what they believe to be God, not a piece of bread or some wine. Therefore, this act cannot be idolatry, by simple logic, even if, in fact (granting momentarily for the sake of argument), Catholics are mistaken that the bread and wine have been transformed, for they would still not be adoring mere bread and wine in their worship, but God Himself, albeit in a mistaken fashion. Calvin will rail against transubstantiation on one hand, yet turn around and say that "bread" is "adored for Christ"—when we do no such thing.

[T]hey paid divine honours to the sign. They say that their veneration is paid to Christ. (IV, 17:37)

Yes, exactly. It is *Calvin's* eucharistic theology that entails signs and symbolism only, not *ours*. Yet he wants to project his errors onto us, prior to condemning us—utilizing a premise that we ourselves do not hold?

But now that the sacrifice has been performed, the Lord has prescribed a different method to us—viz. to transmit the benefit of the sacrifice offered to him by his Son to his believing people. The Lord, therefore, has given us a table at which we may feast, not an altar on which a victim may be offered; he has not consecrated priests to sacrifice, but ministers to distribute a sacred feast. (IV, 18:12)

This doesn't account for the continued New Testament reference to altars, nor the casual, overwhelming acceptance of the priesthood and the sacrifice of the mass by the Church fathers. How did it come about? We contend that this was the teaching passed down from the beginning.

And that there might be no limit to their extravagance, they have deemed it little to say, that it properly becomes a common sacrifice for the whole Church, without adding, that it is at their pleasure to apply it

specially to this one or that, as they choose; or rather, to any one who is willing to purchase their merchandise from them for a price paid. (IV, 18:14)

If something is the application of grace, then it can be applied to one in particular or to all, just as we may pray for one person or for many, or help one person in charity or a group, as it were. That is no difficulty at all. As for “price paid”: this is common to all religion. Protestants take up an offering. They receive spiritual benefit and are expected to provide for their pastors and the upkeep of the building.

In Catholicism it is the same way: except that we believe that the benefit of the mass can be applied to particular souls. In the old covenant, the people were expected to contribute with tithes and portions of their property (animals or grain offerings, etc.). It was not an absolutely free enterprise.

This kind of sacrifice is indispensable in the Lord’s Supper, in which, while we show forth his death, and give him thanks, we offer nothing but the sacrifice of praise. From this office of sacrificing, all Christians are called “a royal priesthood,” because by Christ we offer that sacrifice of praise of which the apostle speaks, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name (1 Pet. 2:9; Heb. 13:15). (IV, 18:17)

The royal priesthood of all believers doesn’t exclude a special class of ordained priests, just as in the old covenant there was a special class of priests. If the Bible isn’t “either/or” in this regard, why should we be?

6. Calvin vs. the Fathers on the Sacrifice of the Mass

[T]hey make two demands upon us—first, that we join in their prayers, their sacrifices, and all their ceremonies; and, secondly, that whatever honour, power, and jurisdiction, Christ has given to his Church, the same we must attribute to theirs. In regard to the first, I admit that all the prophets who were at Jerusalem, when matters there were very corrupt, neither sacrificed apart nor held separate meetings for prayer. For they had the command of God, which enjoined them to meet in the temple of Solomon, and they knew that the Levitical priests, whom the Lord had appointed over sacred matters, and who were not yet

discarded, how unworthy soever they might be of that honour, were still entitled to hold it (Exod. 24:9). But the principal point in the whole question is, that they were not compelled to any superstitious worship, nay, they undertook nothing but what had been instituted by God. But in these men, I mean the Papists, where is the resemblance? Scarcely can we hold any meeting with them without polluting ourselves with open idolatry. Their principal bond of communion is undoubtedly in the Mass, which we abominate as the greatest sacrilege. (IV, 2:9)

We may add, that this perverse course was unknown to the purer Church. For however the more impudent among our opponents may attempt to gloss the matter, it is absolutely certain that all antiquity is opposed to them, as has been above demonstrated in other instances, and may be more surely known by the diligent reading of the Fathers. (IV, 18:9)

Should any one here obtrude concise sentences of the ancients, and contend, or their authority, that the sacrifice which is performed in the Supper is to be understood differently from what we have explained it, let this be our brief reply,—that if the question relates to the approval of the fiction of sacrifice, as imagined by Papists in the mass, there is nothing in the Fathers to countenance the sacrilege. They indeed use the term sacrifice, but they, at the same time, explain that they mean nothing more than the commemoration of that one true sacrifice which Christ, our only sacrifice (as they themselves everywhere proclaim), performed on the cross. (IV, 18:10)

If Calvin wants to define the mass as “open idolatry” and “the greatest sacrilege” why, then, doesn’t he disavow himself from all the *Church fathers* who believed in faith, in the sacrifice of the mass? It’s easy for him to rail against Rome; far more difficult to disentangle himself from the mountain of evidence of the Church fathers, who believed the same thing. He wants to act as if the early Church and history is on his side; therefore he only cherry-picks from the fathers what *appears* to support his dissident view, while ignoring massive amounts of historical patristic facts. No one need take my word or any Catholic’s word on these facts of history. Protestant historians abundantly back up our contentions. For example:

The Catholic church, both Greek and Latin, sees in the Eucharist not only a *sacramentum*, in which God communicates a grace to believers, but at the same time, and in fact mainly, a *sacrificium*, in which believers really offer to God that which is represented by the sensible elements. For this view also the church fathers laid the foundation, and it must be conceded they stand in general far more on the Greek and Roman Catholic than on the Protestant side of this question....

(Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. III: *Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity: A.D. 311–600*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974, from the revised fifth edition of 1910; § 96. “The Sacrifice of the Eucharist”)

It was also widely held from the first that the Eucharist is in some sense a sacrifice, though here again definition was gradual. The suggestion of sacrifice is contained in much of the NT language ... the words of institution, ‘covenant,’ ‘memorial,’ ‘poured out,’ all have sacrificial associations. In early post-NT times the constant repudiation of carnal sacrifice and emphasis on life and prayer at Christian worship did not hinder the Eucharist from being described as a sacrifice from the first ...

From early times the Eucharistic offering was called a sacrifice in virtue of its immediate relation to the sacrifice of Christ.

(Cross, F. L. and E. A. Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2nd edition, Oxford University Press, 1983, 476, 1221)

[T]he Eucharist was regarded as the distinctively Christian sacrifice from the closing decade of the first century, if not earlier. Malachi’s prediction (1:10 f.) that the Lord would reject the Jewish sacrifices and instead would have ‘a pure offering’ made to Him by the Gentiles in every place was early seized [*did.* 14,3; Justin, *dial.* 41,2 f.; Irenaeus, *haer.* 4,17,5] upon by Christians as a prophecy of the eucharist.

The *Didache* indeed actually applies [14, 1] the term *thusia*, or sacrifice, to the eucharist, and the idea is presupposed by Clement in the parallel he discovers [40–4] between the Church’s ministers and the Old Testament priests and levites ... Ignatius’s reference [*Philad.* 4] to ‘one altar, just as there is one bishop,’ reveals that he, too thought in

sacrificial terms. Justin speaks [*Dial.* 117,1] of ‘all the sacrifices in this name which Jesus appointed to be performed, viz. in the eucharist of the bread and the cup, and which are celebrated in every place by Christians.’ Not only here but elsewhere [*Ib.* 41,3] too, he identifies ‘the bread of the eucharist, and the cup likewise of the eucharist,’ with the sacrifice foretold by Malachi. For Irenaeus [*Haer.* 4,17,5] the eucharist is ‘the new oblation of the new covenant,’ ...

It was natural for early Christians to think of the eucharist as a sacrifice. The fulfillment of prophecy demanded a solemn Christian offering, and the rite itself was wrapped in the sacrificial atmosphere with which our Lord invested the Last Supper. The words of institution, ‘Do this’ (*touto poieite*), must have been charged with sacrificial overtones for second-century ears; Justin at any rate understood [*1 apol.* 66,3; cf. *dial.* 41,1] them to mean, ‘Offer this.’ ... Justin ... makes it plain [*Dial.* 41,3] that the bread and the wine themselves were the ‘pure offering’ foretold by Malachi ... he uses [*1 apol.* 65, 3–5] the term ‘thanksgiving’ as technically equivalent to ‘the eucharistized bread and wine.’ The bread and wine, moreover, are offered ‘for a memorial (*eis anamnasin*) of the passion,’ a phrase which in view of his identification of them with the Lord’s body and blood implies much more than an act of purely spiritual recollection. Altogether it would seem that, while his language is not fully explicit, Justin is feeling his way to the conception of the eucharist as the offering of the Saviour’s passion.

(J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, fifth revised edition, 1978, 196–197)

[T]he eucharist was regarded without question as the Christian sacrifice.

(Kelly, *ibid.*, 449)

We hold, therefore, that the communion of the Church ought not to be carried so far by the godly as to lay them under a necessity of following it when it has degenerated to profane and polluted rites. (IV, 2:9)

Whether this happened in the Catholic Church (and from a very early period: the first century: as Protestant historians show us) remains utterly

unproven, despite Calvin's many flowery axiomatic, question-begging condemnations.

When our Lord sent forth the apostles, he gave them a commission (as has been lately said) to preach the Gospel, and baptise those who believed for the remission of sins. He had previously commanded that they should distribute the sacred symbols of his body and blood after his example (Mt. 28:19; Luke 22:19). (IV, 3:6)

Jesus made no reference to "symbol" on Luke 22:19. He said, rather, "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." "Symbol" is pure *eisegesis*, or reading into Scripture what is not there. Matthew 28:19 refers to baptism, which is not a "symbol" of Jesus' body, either.

Elsewhere, explaining how believers now possess Christ, he [St. Augustine] says, "You have him by the sign of the cross, by the sacrament of baptism, by the meat and drink of the altar" (Tract. in Joann. 50). How rightly he enumerates a superstitious rite, among the symbols of Christ's presence, I dispute not; but in comparing the presence of the flesh to the sign of the cross, he sufficiently shows that he has no idea of a twofold body of Christ, one lurking concealed under the bread, and another sitting visible in heaven. (IV, 17:28)

This doesn't follow at all; it is merely Calvin reading his own beliefs into St. Augustine. The mention of "altar" in this section 12 of Tractate 50 on John 11 and 12 is without question a reference to the sacrifice of the mass. Altars always have to do with sacrifice:

If you are good, if you belong to the body represented by Peter, you have Christ both now and hereafter: *now* by faith, by sign, by the sacrament of baptism, by the bread and wine of the altar. You have Christ now, but you will have Him always; for when you have gone hence, you will come to Him who said to the robber, Today shall you be with me in paradise. Luke 23:43 But if you live wickedly, you may seem to have Christ now, because you enter the Church, signest yourself with the sign of Christ, art baptized with the baptism of Christ, minglest yourself with the

members of Christ, and approachest His altar: now you have Christ, but by living wickedly you will not have Him always.

Those who receive, without adoration, as commanded by God, are secure that they deviate not from the command. In commencing any work, nothing is better than this security. They have the example of the apostles, of whom we read not that they prostrated themselves and worshipped, but that they sat down, took and ate. They have the practice of the apostolic Church, where, as Luke relates, believers communicated not in adoration, but in the breaking of bread (Acts 2:42). They have the doctrine of the apostles as taught to the Corinthian Church by Paul, who declares that what he delivered he had received of the Lord (1 Cor. 11:23). (IV, 17:35)

Calvin always tries to make much out of real or alleged agreement with him on certain points by St. Augustine. Yet the same Augustine believed in eucharistic adoration, which proves that he accepted a real, physical presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. This, Calvin describes as “carnal adoration which some men have, with perverse temerity, introduced into the sacrament.” Here is what St. Augustine taught and believed (according to Calvin he would thus be guilty of rank idolatry):

“And fall down before His footstool: for He is holy.” What are we to fall down before? His footstool. What is under the feet is called a footstool, in Greek υποποδιον, in Latin Scabellum or Suppedaneum. But consider, brethren, what he commandeth us to fall down before. In another passage of the Scriptures it is said, “The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool.” Doth he then bid us worship the earth, since in another passage it is said, that it is God’s footstool? How then shall we worship the earth, when the Scripture saith openly, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God”? Yet here it saith, “fall down before His footstool:” and, explaining to us what His footstool is, it saith, “The earth is My footstool.” I am in doubt; I fear to worship the earth, lest He who made the heaven and the earth condemn me; again, I fear not to worship the footstool of my Lord, because the Psalm biddeth me, “fall down before His footstool.” I ask, what is His footstool? and the Scripture telleth me, “the earth is My footstool.” In hesitation I turn unto Christ, since I am herein seeking Himself: and I discover how the earth may be worshipped without impiety, how His footstool may be worshipped without

impiety. For He took upon Him earth from earth; because flesh is from earth, and He received flesh from the flesh of Mary. And because He walked here in very flesh, and gave that very flesh to us to eat for our salvation; and no one eateth that flesh, unless he hath first worshipped: we have found out in what sense such a footstool of our Lord's may be worshipped, and not only that we sin not in worshipping it, but that we sin in not worshipping.

(Exposition on Psalm XCIX, 8; NPNF 1, Vol. VIII)

St. Augustine's theme of the "footstool" of God can be seen several times in Holy Scripture (1 Chron 28:2; Ps 99:5; 132:7; Is 66:1; Matt 5:35; Acts 7:49). Protestant historian Philip Schaff commented on the acceptance of adoration of the consecrated host in the doctrine of the fathers:

As to the adoration of the consecrated elements: This follows with logical necessity from the doctrine of transubstantiation, and is the sure touchstone of it ... Chrysostom says: "The wise men adored Christ in the manger; we see him not in the manger, but on the altar, and should pay him still greater homage." Theodoret, in the passage already cited, likewise uses the term *proskuvnei'n* [Greek for "worship"], but at the same time expressly asserts the continuance of the substance of the elements. Ambrose speaks once of the flesh of Christ "which we to-day adore in the mysteries," and Augustine, of an adoration preceding the participation of the flesh of Christ.

(*History of the Christian Church*, Vol. III, chapter 7, § 95. *The Sacrament of the Eucharist*; 501–502)

Calvin is buried by an avalanche of patristic data that thoroughly supports the Catholic position:

The Didache

Assemble on the Lord's day, and break bread and offer the Eucharist; but first make confession of your faults, so that your sacrifice may be a pure one. Anyone who has a difference with his fellow is not to take part with you until he has been reconciled, so as to avoid any profanation of your sacrifice [Matt. 5:23–24]. For this is the offering of which the Lord has

said, 'Everywhere and always bring me a sacrifice that is undefiled, for I am a great king, says the Lord, and my name is the wonder of nations' [Mal. 1:11, 14].

(Didache 14 [A.D. 70])

St. Clement of Rome

Our sin will not be small if we eject from the episcopate those who blamelessly and holily have offered its sacrifices.

(Letter to the Corinthians 44:4–5 [A.D. 80])

St. Ignatius of Antioch

Make certain, therefore, that you all observe one common Eucharist; for there is but one Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and but one cup of union with his Blood, and one single altar of sacrifice ...

(Letter to the Philadelphians 4 [A.D. 110])

St. Justin Martyr

God speaks by the mouth of Malachi, one of the twelve [minor prophets], as I said before, about the sacrifices at that time presented by you: 'I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord, and I will not accept your sacrifices at your hands; for from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, my name has been glorified among the Gentiles, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering, for my name is great among the Gentiles ... [Mal. 1:10–11]. He then speaks of those Gentiles, namely us [Christians] who in every place offer sacrifices to him, that is, the bread of the Eucharist and also the cup of the Eucharist.

(Dialogue with Trypho the Jew 41 [A.D. 155])

St. Irenaeus

He took from among creation that which is bread, and gave thanks, saying, 'This is my body.' The cup likewise, which is from among the creation to which we belong, he confessed to be his blood. He taught the new sacrifice of the new covenant, of which Malachi, one of the twelve [minor] prophets, had signified beforehand: 'You do not do my will, says the Lord

Almighty, and I will not accept a sacrifice at your hands. For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is glorified among the Gentiles, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure sacrifice; for great is my name among the Gentiles, says the Lord Almighty' [Mal. 1:10–11]. By these words he makes it plain that the former people will cease to make offerings to God; but that in every place sacrifice will be offered to him, and indeed, a pure one, for his name is glorified among the Gentiles.

(*Against Heresies*, IV, 17, 5)

Inasmuch, then, as the Church offers with single-mindedness, her gift is justly reckoned a pure sacrifice with God.... For it behoves us to make an oblation to God, ... the Church alone offers this pure oblation to the Creator, ...

(*Against Heresies*, IV, 18, 4; ANF, Vol. I)

For we offer to Him His own, announcing consistently the fellowship and union of the flesh and Spirit. For as the bread, which is produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer common bread, but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly; so also our bodies, when they receive the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, having the hope of the resurrection to eternity.

(*Against Heresies*, IV, 18, 5; ANF, Vol. I)

St. Cyprian of Carthage

If Christ Jesus, our Lord and God, is himself the high priest of God the Father; and if he offered himself as a sacrifice to the Father; and if he commanded that this be done in commemoration of himself, then certainly the priest, who imitates that which Christ did, truly functions in place of Christ.

(*Letters* 63:14)

St. Hilary of Poitiers

Hilary, for example, describes [*Tract. in ps.* 68, 19] the Christian altar as 'a table of sacrifice' and speaks [*Ib.* 68, 26] ... of the immolation of the paschal lamb made under the new law.

(J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, fifth revised edition, 1978, 453)

St. Basil the Great

It is good and beneficial to communicate every day, and to partake of the holy body and blood of Christ.... once the priest has completed the offering ...

(Letter XCIII, To the Patrician Cæsaria; NPNF 2, Vol. VIII)

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

Then, after the spiritual sacrifice, the bloodless service, is completed, over that sacrifice of propitiation we entreat God for the common peace of the Churches, for the welfare of the world; for kings; for soldiers and allies; for the sick; for the afflicted; and, in a word, for all who stand in need of succour we all pray and offer this sacrifice.

(*Catechetical Lecture XXIII*, 7–8; NPNF 2, Vol. VII)

St. Ambrose

We saw the prince of priests coming to us, we saw and heard him offering his blood for us. We follow, inasmuch as we are able, being priests, and we offer the sacrifice on behalf of the people. Even if we are of but little merit, still, in the sacrifice, we are honorable. Even if Christ is not now seen as the one who offers the sacrifice, nevertheless it is he himself that is offered in sacrifice here on Earth when the body of Christ is offered. Indeed, to offer himself he is made visible in us, he whose word makes holy the sacrifice that is offered.

(*Commentaries on Twelve Psalms of David* 38:25)

St. John Chrysostom

Christ is present. The One who prepared that [Holy Thursday] table is the very One who now prepares this [altar] table. For it is not a man who makes the sacrificial gifts become the Body and Blood of Christ, but He that was crucified for us, Christ Himself. The priest stands there carrying out the action, but the power and grace is of God. “This is My Body,” he says. This statement transforms the gifts.

(*Homilies on the Treachery of Judas*, 1, 6; in William A. Jurgens, editor and translator, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, three volumes, Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, Vol. II, 1970, 104–105)

When you see the Lord immolated and lying upon the altar, and the priest bent over that sacrifice praying, and all the people empurpled by that precious blood, can you think that you are still among men and on earth? Or are you not lifted up to heaven?

(*The Priesthood* 3:4:177)

Reverence, therefore, reverence this table, of which we are all communicants! Christ, slain for us, the sacrificial victim who is placed thereon!

(*Homilies on Romans* 8:8)

In ancient times, because men were very imperfect, God did not scorn to receive the blood which they were offering ... to draw them away from those idols; and this very thing again was because of his indescribable, tender affection. But now he has transferred the priestly action to what is most awesome and magnificent. He has changed the sacrifice itself, and instead of the butchering of dumb beasts, he commands the offering up of himself.

(*Homilies on First Corinthians*, 24:2)

What then? Do we not offer daily? Yes, we offer, but making remembrance of his death; and this remembrance is one and not many. How is it one and not many? Because this sacrifice is offered once, like that in the Holy of Holies. This sacrifice is a type of that, and this remembrance a type of that. We offer always the same, not one sheep now and another tomorrow, but the same thing always. Thus there is one sacrifice. By this reasoning, since the sacrifice is offered everywhere, are there, then, a multiplicity of Christs? By no means! Christ is one everywhere. He is complete here, complete there, one body. And just as he is one body and not many though offered everywhere, so too is there one sacrifice.

(*Homilies on Hebrews* 17:3 [6])

St. Jerome

According to Jerome [*Ep.* 114, 2], the dignity of the eucharistic liturgy derives from its association with the passion; it is no empty memorial, for the victim of the Church's daily sacrifice is the Saviour himself. [*Ib.* 21, 26]

(in Kelly, *ibid.*, 453)

St. Augustine

Because there was there a sacrifice after the order of Aaron, and afterwards He of His Own Body and Blood appointed a sacrifice after the order of Melchizedek; He changed then His Countenance in the Priesthood, and sent away the kingdom of the Jews, and came to the Gentiles....

(*Exposition on Psalm XXXIV*, 1; NPNF 1, Vol. VIII)

Chapter 20.—*Of the Supreme and True Sacrifice Which Was Effected by the Mediator Between God and Men.*

And hence that true Mediator, in so far as, by assuming the form of a servant, He became the Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, though in the form of God He received sacrifice together with the Father, with whom He is one God, yet in the form of a servant He chose rather to be than to receive a sacrifice, that not even by this instance any one might have occasion to suppose that sacrifice should be rendered to any creature. Thus He is both the Priest who offers and the Sacrifice offered. And He designed that there should be a daily sign of this in the sacrifice of the Church, which, being His body, learns to offer herself through Him. Of this true Sacrifice the ancient sacrifices of the saints were the various and numerous signs; and it was thus variously figured, just as one thing is signified by a variety of words, that there may be less weariness when we speak of it much. To this supreme and true sacrifice all false sacrifices have given place.

(*City of God*, Book X, 20; NPNF 1, Vol. II)

For then first appeared the sacrifice which is now offered to God by Christians in the whole wide world, and that is fulfilled which long after the event was said by the prophet to Christ, who was yet to come in the flesh, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek," ...

(*City of God*, Book XVI, 22; NPNF 1, Vol. II)

Not only is no one forbidden to take as food the Blood of this Sacrifice, rather, all who wish to possess life are exhorted to drink thereof.

(*Questions of the Hepateuch*, 3, 57; in Jurgens, *ibid.*, Vol. III, 1979, 134)

[F]or it is to God that sacrifices are offered ... But he who knows the one sacrifice of Christians, which is the sacrifice offered in those places, also knows that these are not sacrifices offered to the martyrs ... For we do not ordain priests and offer sacrifices to our martyrs, as they do to their dead men, for that would be incongruous, undue, and unlawful, such being due only to God.

(*City of God*, Book VIII, chapter 27; NPNF 1, Vol. II)

Was not Christ once for all offered up in His own person as a sacrifice? and yet, is He not likewise offered up in the sacrament as a sacrifice, not only in the special solemnities of Easter, but also daily among our congregations; so that the man who, being questioned, answers that He is offered as a sacrifice in that ordinance, declares what is strictly true? For if sacraments had not some points of real resemblance to the things of which they are the sacraments, they would not be sacraments at all.

(*Epistles*, 98, 9; NPNF 1, Vol. I)

The animal sacrifices, therefore, presumptuously claimed by devils, were an imitation of the true sacrifice which is due only to the one true God, and which Christ alone offered on His altar.... This sacrifice is also commemorated by Christians, in the sacred offering and participation of the body and blood of Christ.

(*Against Faustus*, XX, 18; NPNF 1, Vol. IV)

St. Cyril of Alexandria

He states demonstratively: "This is My Body," and "This is My Blood" (Mt. 26:26–28) "lest you might suppose the things that are seen as a figure. Rather, by some secret of the all-powerful God the things seen are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ, truly offered in a sacrifice

in which we, as participants, receive the life-giving and sanctifying power of Christ.

(*Commentary on Matthew* [Mt. 26:27]; in Jurgens, *ibid.*, Vol. III, 220)

St. Gregory the Great

If guilty deeds are not beyond absolution even after death, the sacred offering of the saving Victim consistently aids souls even after death ...

(*Dialogues* 4, 55; in Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*: Vol. 1 of 5: *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100–600)*, Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1971, 356)

Augustine himself, in several passages (Ep. 120, ad Honorat. Cont. Advers. Legis.), explains, that it is nothing else than a sacrifice of praise. In short, you will find in his writings, *passim*, that the only reason for which the Lord's Supper is called a sacrifice is, because it is a commemoration, an image, a testimonial of that singular, true, and only sacrifice by which Christ expiated our guilt.... Chrysostom speaks to the same effect. They so strongly claim the honour of the priesthood for Christ alone, that Augustine declares it would be equivalent to Antichrist for any one to make a bishop to be an intercessor between God and man (August. Cont. Parmen. Lib. 2 c. 8). (IV, 18:10)

Elsewhere, Augustine wrote:

[T]here are many other things which most properly can keep me in [the Catholic Church's] bosom. The unanimity of peoples and nations keeps me here. Her authority, inaugurated in miracles, nourished by hope, augmented by love, and confirmed by her age, keeps me here. The succession of priests, from the very see of the apostle Peter, to whom the Lord, after his resurrection, gave the charge of feeding his sheep [John 21:15–17], up to the present episcopate, keeps me here. And last, the very name Catholic, which, not without reason, belongs to this Church alone, in the face of so many heretics, so much so that, although all heretics want to be called 'Catholic,' when a stranger inquires where the Catholic Church meets, none of the heretics would dare to point out his own basilica or house.

(*Against the Letter of Mani Called "The Foundation"* 4:5)

Howbeit even if it were no where at all read in the Old Scriptures, not small is the authority, which in this usage is clear, of the whole Church, namely, that in the prayers of the priest which are offered to the Lord God at His altar, the Commendation of the dead hath also its place.

(*On Care to be Had for the Dead*, section 3, NPNF 1–03)

Would Calvin have us all absurdly believe that St. John Chrysostom wrote a book called *Treatise Concerning the Christian Priesthood*, while somehow not believing in *priests*?! He wrote in that work:

For the priestly office is indeed discharged on earth, but it ranks amongst heavenly ordinances; and very naturally so: for neither man, nor angel, nor archangel, nor any other created power, but the Paraclete Himself, instituted this vocation, and persuaded men while still abiding in the flesh to represent the ministry of angels. Wherefore the consecrated priest ought to be as pure as if he were standing in the heavens themselves in the midst of those powers.

(Book III, section 4)

[A]ncient writers have wrested this commemoration to a different purpose than was accordant to the divine institution (the Supper somehow seemed to them to present the appearance of a repeated, or at least renewed, immolation), ... Seeing that they retained a pious and orthodox view of the whole ordinance—and I cannot discover that they wished to derogate in the least from the one sacrifice of the Lord—I cannot charge them with any impiety, and yet I think they cannot be excused from having erred somewhat in the mode of action. They imitated the Jewish mode of sacrificing more closely than either Christ had ordained, or the nature of the gospel allowed. The only thing, therefore, for which they may be justly censured is, that preposterous analogy, that not contented with the simple and genuine institution of Christ, they declined too much to the shadows of the law. (IV, 18:11)

This is a common tactic of Calvin's: he will charge the fathers (a few or many) with error, but then soften the blow so that their integrity is

maintained (so that he can still cite them as models in the early Church in other areas). But if the Catholics of his era exhibit the *very same* beliefs, he will demonize them and so distort their beliefs that they are barely recognizable.

The present instance is an altogether typical case. He charges the fathers with the “error” of believing in some semblance of the mass, yet “cannot charge them with any impiety”—whereas the Catholics of his time (who believe the same exact thing) are in league with Satan and guilty of the grossest sacrileges and abominations.

He knows that these fathers hadn’t “wished to derogate in the least from the one sacrifice of the Lord” yet at the same time he concludes that virtually all contemporary Catholics *did* do so. He doesn’t accept their own testimony concerning their own beliefs.

7. Crosses, Crucifixes, and Statues of Christ: Idolatry?

It is now about nine hundred years since the Council of Constantinople, convened under the Emperor Leo, determined that the images set up in temples were to be thrown down and broken to pieces. Shortly after, the Council of Nice, which was assembled by Irene, through dislike of the former, decreed that images were to be restored. Which of the two councils shall we acknowledge to be lawful? The latter has usually prevailed, and secured a place for images in churches. But Augustine maintains that this could not be done without the greatest danger of idolatry. (IV, 9:9)

Idolatry is always a danger with some people, because it is an internal thing, and folks can always use images wrongly, in an impious or idolatrous fashion, if they so choose. That doesn’t make the image wrong in and of itself, as all things can be distorted and misunderstood.

Epiphanius, at a later period, speaks much more harshly (Epist. ad Joann. Hierosolym. et Lib. 3 contra Hæres.). For he says, it is an unspeakable abomination to see images in a Christian temple. (IV, 9:9)

That's odd, seeing that God Himself commanded this for His own temple. The ark of the covenant was an image. It had carved cherubim (Ex 25:22; Num 7:89). God said this is where He would meet with His people, on the mercy seat between the two cherubim (Ex 30:6). Joshua "fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD" (Josh 7:6). Was this idolatry? The temple had huge images in it, by the express decree of God:

1 Kings 6:23–29 In the inner sanctuary he made two cherubim of olivewood, each ten cubits high. [24] Five cubits was the length of one wing of the cherub, and five cubits the length of the other wing of the cherub; it was ten cubits from the tip of one wing to the tip of the other. [25] The other cherub also measured ten cubits; both cherubim had the same measure and the same form. [26] The height of one cherub was ten cubits, and so was that of the other cherub. [27] He put the cherubim in the innermost part of the house; and the wings of the cherubim were spread out so that a wing of one touched the one wall, and a wing of the other cherub touched the other wall; their other wings touched each other in the middle of the house. [28] And he overlaid the cherubim with gold. [29] He carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubim and palm trees and open flowers, in the inner and outer rooms. (cf. 2 Chron 3:7; Ezek 41:20, 25)

The cherubim were angels (creatures): so use of them as aids in worship is precisely of the sort that Protestants object to in the case of a statue of a saint. But God commanded it. The very holiest places in Judaism (the temple, holy of holies, ark of the covenant) had images. The Bible often mentions praying or worshiping toward the temple (e.g., 2 Chron 6:20–33; Ps 5:7; Ps 28:2; Ps 134:2) or even bowing before it (Ps 138:2) and the temple had images. It wasn't a plain (quaint but boring) white clapboard building, like New England Calvinist churches.

Could those who speak thus approve of that council if they were alive in the present day? But if historians speak true, and we believe their acts, not only images themselves, but the worship of them, were there sanctioned. Now it is plain that this decree emanated from Satan. Do

they not show, by corrupting and wresting Scripture, that they held it in derision? (IV, 9:9)

It's not "plain" in the slightest! Calvin makes an unwarranted conclusion that all images (not just corruption or inadequate understanding of the use of them) *automatically* reduce to idolatry. If that is so, then God Himself is an incompetent judge of these matters, given the scriptural data.

This was the flimsy rationale used by a significant number of the early Calvinists to engage in iconoclasm and to smash stained glass and even statues of Jesus Christ, as if Catholics were worshiping plaster rather than our Lord Jesus. This mentality derived far more from Islam than from Hebrew-Christian tradition or the Bible. Historically, it flourished after the arrival of Islam, because of that religion's strong iconoclasm.

If Calvin takes an absolute view against all Christian images, it is He who wars against Scripture, history, and indeed God Himself. God would be reduced to a Being Who didn't even know that what He Himself commanded was idolatry. In other words, either God wouldn't be God, or He would be a self-contradictory, wicked "god" at cross-purposes with himself. Since Calvin wouldn't accept those conclusions, his argument must be ditched by the principle of *reductio ad absurdum*.

Meanwhile, seeing that this brutish stupidity has overspread the globe, men longing after visible forms of God, and so forming deities of wood and stone, silver and gold, or of any other dead and corruptible matter, we must hold it as a first principle, that as often as any form is assigned to God, his glory is corrupted by an impious lie. In the Law, accordingly, after God had claimed the glory of divinity for himself alone, when he comes to show what kind of worship he approves and rejects, he immediately adds, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth," (Exod. 20:4). By these words he curbs any licentious attempt we might make to represent him by a visible shape, ... God makes no comparison between images, as if one were more, and another less befitting; he rejects, without exception, all shapes and pictures, and other symbols by which the superstitious imagine they can bring him near to them. (I, 11:1)

The Lord, however, not only forbids any image of himself to be erected by a statuary, but to be formed by any artist whatever, because every such image is sinful and insulting to his majesty. (I, 11:4)

But, I ask, whence this stupidity, but just because they are defrauded of the only doctrine which was fit to instruct them? The simple reason why those who had the charge of churches resigned the office of teaching to idols was, because they themselves were dumb. Paul declares, that by the true preaching of the gospel Christ is portrayed and in a manner crucified before our eyes (Gal. 3:1). Of what use, then, were the erection in churches of so many crosses of wood and stone, silver and gold, if this doctrine were faithfully and honestly preached—viz. Christ died that he might bear our curse upon the tree, that he might expiate our sins by the sacrifice of his body, wash them in his blood, and, in short, reconcile us to God the Father? From this one doctrine the people would learn more than from a thousand crosses of wood and stone. As for crosses of gold and silver, it may be true that the avaricious give their eyes and minds to them more eagerly than to any heavenly instructor. (I, 11:7)

We think it unlawful to give a visible shape to God, because God himself has forbidden it, and because it cannot be done without, in some degree, tarnishing his glory. (I, 11:12)

The setting up of images in churches, is a defiling ... By and by, folk go and kneel down to it.... The Papists ... paint and portray 'Jesus Christ'—Who (as we know) is not only man but also God manifested in the flesh. He is God's eternal Son, in Whom the fullness of the Godhead dwells—yes, even substantially ... Should we have portraitures and images, whereby only the flesh may be represented? Is it not a wiping away of that which is chiefest in our Lord Jesus Christ—that is, to wit, of His Divine Majesty? Yes!

And therefore, whensoever a crucifix stands moping and mowing in the church—it is all one as if the Devil had defaced the Son of God. You see, then, that the Papists are destitute of all excuse ... They abuse their puppets and pictures, after that fashion.

(*Sermons on Deuteronomy*, [4:15–20], Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, reprinted in 1987, 138a51–55 & 138b3–48)

Catholics reply that Jesus is God, and the image of God (Jn 12:45; 14:7–9; 2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3). Scripture provides many examples of symbols used to evoke a memory or appreciation of something (which is the purpose of crosses and crucifixes). God stated that rainbows would bring to mind His covenant with mankind (Gen 9:8–17). He commanded the Jews to make tassels on the corners of their garments, “to look upon and remember all the commandments of the LORD” (Num 15:37–40).

Moses was instructed to make a bronze serpent, so that “if a serpent bit any man, he would look at the bronze serpent and live” (Num 21:4–9). Observing God’s creation brings to mind God’s character and qualities (Ps 19:1–4; Rom 1:19–20). Birds and flowers remind us of God’s loving provision for His creatures (Matt 6:26–30). Jesus is seen as a slain Lamb in heaven, after the resurrection and ascension (Rev 5:6–9).

Remembering the cross and what our Lord and Savior Jesus did there for us, and doing so with a simple visual aid of a cross or crucifix, is entirely within the biblical worldview, and established beyond doubt by direct analogy. In this way, we can be reminded of a central theme in St. Paul’s preaching:

1 Corinthians 1:22–24 For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, [23] but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, [24] but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. (cf. 1:13, 17–18; Rom 6:6)

1 Corinthians 2:2 For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. (cf. 2 Cor 13:4)

Galatians 3:1 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?

Galatians 6:12, 14 It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that would compel you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ... [14] But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which

the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (cf. 2:20; Eph 2:16)

Philippians 3:18 For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, live as enemies of the cross of Christ. (cf. 2:8; Col 1:20; 2:14)

PART TWO: AGREEMENT

(Beliefs of Calvin That Are Harmonious With Catholicism)

Chapter Five

V. Agreement on Ecclesiology (Theology of the Church and Church Government)

1. The Church as an Absolutely Necessary “Mother”

What God has thus joined, let not man put asunder (Mark 10:9): to those to whom he is a Father, the Church must also be a mother. This was true not merely under the Law, but even now after the advent of Christ; since Paul declares that we are the children of a new, even a heavenly Jerusalem (Gal. 4:26). (IV, 1:1)

But as it is now our purpose to discourse of the visible Church, let us learn, from her single title of Mother, how useful, nay, how necessary the knowledge of her is, ... (IV, 1:4)

We see that God, who might perfect his people in a moment, chooses not to bring them to manhood in any other way than by the education of the Church.... Isaiah had long before given this as the characteristic of the kingdom of Christ, “My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever” (Isa. 59:21). Hence it follows, that all who reject the spiritual food of the soul divinely offered to them by the hands of the Church, deserve to perish of hunger and famine. (IV, 1:5)

God has been pleased to preserve the pure preaching of his word by her instrumentality, and to exhibit himself to us as a parent ... (IV, 1:10)

For when Paul instructed Timothy, and trained him to the office of a true bishop, he says, he did it in order that he might learn how to behave himself in the Church of God. And to make him devote himself to the

work with greater seriousness and zeal, he adds, that the Church is the pillar and ground of the truth. And what else do these words mean, than just that the truth of God is preserved in the Church, and preserved by the instrumentality of preaching; ... The reason, therefore, why the truth, instead of being extinguished in the world, remains unimpaired, is, because he has the Church as a faithful guardian, by whose aid and ministry it is maintained. (IV, 8:12)

The Church is to be heard, say they. Who denies this? since she decides nothing but according to the word of God. (IV, 8:15)

2. No Salvation Outside of the Church

[T]here is no other means of entering into life unless she conceive us in the womb and give us birth, unless she nourish us at her breasts, and, in short, keep us under her charge and government, until, divested of mortal flesh, we become like the angels (Mt. 22:30). For our weakness does not permit us to leave the school until we have spent our whole lives as scholars. Moreover, beyond the pale of the Church no forgiveness of sins, no salvation, can be hoped for, as Isaiah and Joel testify (Isa. 37:32; Joel 2:32). ... the abandonment of the Church is always fatal. (IV, 1:4)

The knowledge of his body, inasmuch as he knew it to be more necessary for our salvation, he has made known to us by surer marks. (IV, 1:8)

God has been pleased to preserve the pure preaching of his word by her instrumentality, ... while he feeds us with spiritual nourishment, and provides whatever is conducive to our salvation. (IV, 1:10)

Accordingly, in the Creed forgiveness of sins is appropriately subjoined to belief as to the Church, because none obtain forgiveness but those who are citizens, and of the household of the Church, as we read in the Prophet (Is. 33:24). The first place, therefore, should be given to the building of the heavenly Jerusalem, in which God afterwards is pleased to wipe away the iniquity of all who betake themselves to it. I say, however, that the Church must first be built; not that there can be any church without forgiveness of sins, but because the Lord has not promised his mercy save in the communion of saints. (IV, 1:20)

Three things are here to be observed. First, Whatever be the holiness which the children of God possess, it is always under the condition, that so long as they dwell in a mortal body, they cannot stand before God without forgiveness of sins. Secondly, This benefit is so peculiar to the Church, that we cannot enjoy it unless we continue in the communion of the Church. Thirdly, It is dispensed to us by the ministers and pastors of the Church, either in the preaching of the Gospel or the administration of the Sacraments, and herein is especially manifested the power of the keys, which the Lord has bestowed on the company of the faithful. Accordingly, let each of us consider it to be his duty to seek forgiveness of sins only where the Lord has placed it. Of the public reconciliation which relates to discipline, we shall speak at the proper place. (IV, 1:22)

3. The Church as Guardian of True Doctrine and Truth

We may add, that so long as we continue in the bosom of the Church, we are sure that the truth will remain with us. (IV, 1:3)

[T]here is no other bond by which the saints can be kept together than by uniting with one consent to observe the order which God has appointed in his Church for learning and making progress. For this end, especially, as I have observed, believers were anciently enjoined under the Law to flock together to the sanctuary; for when Moses speaks of the habitation of God, he at the same time calls it the place of the name of God, the place where he will record his name (Exod. 20:24); thus plainly teaching that no use could be made of it without the doctrine of godliness.... Herein is the unity of the faith happily realised, when all, from the highest to the lowest, aspire to the head. (IV, 1:5)

The Church universal is the multitude collected out of all nations, who, though dispersed and far distant from each other, agree in one truth of divine doctrine, and are bound together by the tie of a common religion. (IV, 1:9)

So highly does he recommend her authority, that when it is violated he considers that his own authority is impaired. For there is no small weight

in the designation given to her, “the house of God,” “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). By these words Paul intimates, that to prevent the truth from perishing in the world, the Church is its faithful guardian, because God has been pleased to preserve the pure preaching of his word by her instrumentality, and to exhibit himself to us as a parent while he feeds us with spiritual nourishment, and provides whatever is conducive to our salvation. (IV, 1:10)

I always hold that the truth does not perish in the Church though it be oppressed by one council, but is wondrously preserved by the Lord to rise again, and prove victorious in his own time. (IV, 9:13)

4. The Church as the Mystical Body of Christ

The judgment which ought to be formed concerning the visible Church which comes under our observation, must, I think, be sufficiently clear from what has been said. I have observed that the Scriptures speak of the Church in two ways. Sometimes when they speak of the Church they mean the Church as it really is before God—the Church into which none are admitted but those who by the gift of adoption are sons of God, and by the sanctification of the Spirit true members of Christ. In this case it not only comprehends the saints who dwell on the earth, but all the elect who have existed from the beginning of the world. Often, too, by the name of Church is designated the whole body of mankind scattered throughout the world, who profess to worship one God and Christ, who by baptism are initiated into the faith; ... (IV, 1:7)

5. The Church: Analogy to the Old Testament Assembly

To their testimony Ezekiel subscribes, when he declares, “They shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel” (Ezek. 3:9); as, on the other hand, those who turn to the cultivation of true piety are said to inscribe their names among the citizens of Jerusalem. For which reason it is said in the psalm, “Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation; that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice

in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance” (Ps. 106:4, 5). By these words the paternal favour of God and the special evidence of spiritual life are confined to his peculiar people, ... (IV, 1:4)

With this view, it pleased him in ancient times that sacred meetings should be held in the sanctuary, that consent in faith might be nourished by doctrine proceeding from the lips of the priest. Those magnificent titles, as when the temple is called God’s rest, his sanctuary, his habitation, and when he is said to dwell between the cherubims (Ps. 132:13, 14; 80:1), are used for no other purpose than to procure respect, love, reverence, and dignity to the ministry of heavenly doctrine, to which otherwise the appearance of an insignificant human being might be in no slight degree derogatory. Therefore, to teach us that the treasure offered to us in earthen vessels is of inestimable value (2 Cor. 4:7), God himself appears and, as the author of this ordinance, requires his presence to be recognised in his own institution.... For, as he did not commit his ancient people to angels, but raised up teachers on the earth to perform a truly angelical office, so he is pleased to instruct us in the present day by human means. (IV, 1:5)

On this head, Christ himself, his apostles, and almost all the prophets, have furnished us with examples. Fearful are the descriptions in which Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Habakkuk, and others, deplore the diseases of the Church of Jerusalem. (IV, 1:18)

6. Church Councils Have a Legitimate Place

What, then, you will say, is there no authority in the definitions of councils? Yes, indeed; for I do not contend that all councils are to be condemned, and all their acts rescinded, or, as it is said, made one complete erasure. (IV, 9:8)

Thus those ancient Councils of Nice, Constantinople, the first of Ephesus, Chalcedon, and the like, which were held for refuting errors, we willingly embrace, and reverence as sacred, in so far as relates to doctrines of faith, for they contain nothing but the pure and genuine interpretation of Scripture, which the holy Fathers with spiritual prudence adopted to crush the enemies of religion who had then arisen. In some later councils, also,

we see displayed a true zeal for religion, and moreover unequivocal marks of genius, learning, and prudence. (IV, 9:8)

Having proved that no power was given to the Church to set up any new doctrine, let us now treat of the power attributed to them in the interpretation of Scripture. We readily admit, that when any doctrine is brought under discussion, there is not a better or surer remedy than for a council of true bishops to meet and discuss the controverted point. There will be much more weight in a decision of this kind, to which the pastors of churches have agreed in common after invoking the Spirit of Christ, than if each, adopting it for himself, should deliver it to his people, or a few individuals should meet in private and decide. Secondly, When bishops have assembled in one place, they deliberate more conveniently in common, fixing both the doctrine and the form of teaching it, lest diversity give offence. Thirdly, Paul prescribes this method of determining doctrine. For when he gives the power of deciding to a single church, he shows what the course of procedure should be in more important cases—namely, that the churches together are to take common cognisance. And the very feeling of piety tells us, that if any one trouble the Church with some novelty in doctrine, and the matter be carried so far that there is danger of a greater dissension, the churches should first meet, examine the question, and at length, after due discussion, decide according to Scripture, which may both put an end to doubt in the people, and stop the mouths of wicked and restless men, so as to prevent the matter from proceeding farther. Thus when Arius arose, the Council of Nice was convened, and by its authority both crushed the wicked attempts of this impious man, and restored peace to the churches which he had vexed, and asserted the eternal divinity of Christ in opposition to his sacrilegious dogma. (IV, 9:13)

7. The Church Can Impose Penances

A third end of discipline is, that the sinner may be ashamed, and begin to repent of his turpitude. Hence it is for their interest also that their iniquity should be chastised, that whereas they would have become more obstinate by indulgence, they may be aroused by the rod. This the apostle intimates when he thus writes—“If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed” (2

Thess. 3:14). Again, when he says that he had delivered the Corinthian to Satan, “that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. 5:5); that is, as I interpret it, he gave him over to temporal condemnation, that he might be made safe for eternity. And he says that he gave him over to Satan because the devil is without the Church, as Christ is in the Church. Some interpret this of a certain infliction on the flesh, but this interpretation seems to me most improbable. (August. de Verb. Apostol. Sermon. 68) (IV, 12:5)

[S]ome sins are public, others private or secret. Public are those which are done not before one or two witnesses, but openly, and to the offence of the whole Church.... The former class requires not the different steps which Christ enumerates; but whenever anything of the kind occurs, the Church ought to do her duty by summoning the offender, and correcting him according to his fault.... Flagrant iniquities require a sharper remedy.... This was the method observed by the ancient and purer Church, when legitimate government was in vigour. When any one was guilty of some flagrant iniquity, and thereby caused scandal, he was first ordered to abstain from participation in the sacred Supper, and thereafter to humble himself before God, and testify his penitence before the Church. There were, moreover, solemn rites, which, as indications of repentance, were wont to be prescribed to those who had lapsed. (IV, 12:6)

So far was any one from being exempted from this discipline, that even princes submitted to it in common with their subjects; and justly, since it is the discipline of Christ, to whom all sceptres and diadems should be subject. Thus Theodosius, when excommunicated by Ambrose, because of the slaughter perpetrated at Thessalonica, laid aside all the royal insignia with which he was surrounded, and publicly in the Church bewailed the sin into which he had been betrayed by the fraud of others, with groans and tears imploring pardon. Great kings should not think it a disgrace to them to prostrate themselves suppliantly before Christ, the King of kings; nor ought they to be displeased at being judged by the Church. For seeing they seldom hear anything in their courts but mere flattery, the more necessary is it that the Lord should correct them by the mouth of his priests. (IV, 12:7)

The remaining part of discipline, which is not, strictly speaking, included in the power of the keys, is when pastors, according to the necessity of the times, exhort the people ... to other exercises of humiliation, repentance, and faith, the time, mode, and form of these not being prescribed by the Word of God, but left to the judgment of the Church. As the observance of this part of discipline is useful, so it was always used in the Church, even from the days of the apostles. (IV, 12:14)

8. *De Facto* “Indulgences” (Relaxing Temporal Penalties)

She looses him whom she receives into communion, because she makes him, as it were, a partaker of the unity which she has in Christ Jesus. Let no one, therefore, contumaciously despise the judgment of the Church, or account it a small matter that he is condemned by the suffrages of the faithful. The Lord testifies that such judgment of the faithful is nothing else than the promulgation of his own sentence, and that what they do on earth is ratified in heaven. For they have the word of God by which they condemn the perverse: they have the word by which they take back the penitent into favour. (IV, 11:2)

For they act by the word of the Lord in condemning the perverse, and by the word of the Lord in taking the penitent back into favour (John 20:23). (IV, 12:4)

This was the method observed by the ancient and purer Church, ... When the penitent had thus made satisfaction to the Church, he was received into favour by the laying on of hands. This admission often receives the name of *peace* from Cyprian, who briefly describes the form. “They act as penitents for a certain time, next they come to confession, and receive the right of communion by the laying on of hands of the bishop and clergy.” Although the bishop with the clergy thus superintended the restoration of the penitent, the consent of the people was at the same time required, as he elsewhere explains. (IV, 12:6)

It ought not, however, to be omitted, that the Church, in exercising severity, ought to accompany it with the spirit of meekness. For, as Paul enjoins, we must always take care that he on whom discipline is exercised be not “swallowed up with overmuch sorrow” (2 Cor. 2:7): for in this way,

instead of cure there would be destruction. The rule of moderation will be best obtained from the end contemplated. For the object of excommunication being to bring the sinner to repentance ... (IV, 12:8)

Cyprian, indeed, declares that it was not with his own will he was thus rigorous. "Our patience, facility, and humanity (he says, Lib. 1 Ep. 3), are ready to all who come. I wish all to be brought back into the Church: I wish all our fellow-soldiers to be contained within the camp of Christ and the mansions of God the Father. I forgive all; I disguise much; from an earnest desire of collecting the brotherhood, I do not minutely scrutinise all the faults which have been committed against God. I myself often err, by forgiving offences more than I ought. Those returning in repentance, and those confessing their sins with simple and humble satisfaction, I embrace with prompt and full delight." Chrysostom, who is somewhat more severe, still speaks thus: "If God is so kind, why should his priest wish to appear austere?" We know, moreover, how indulgently Augustine treated the Donatists; not hesitating to admit any who returned from schism to their bishopric, as soon as they declared their repentance. (IV, 12:8)

Hence, though ecclesiastical discipline does not allow us to be on familiar and intimate terms with excommunicated persons, still we ought to strive by all possible means to bring them to a better mind, and recover them to the fellowship and unity of the Church: as the apostle also says, "Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother" (2 Thess. 3:15). (IV, 12:10)

9. The Church Has the Power of Excommunication

... the discipline of excommunication which has been committed to the Church. Now, the Church binds him whom she excommunicates, not by plunging him into eternal ruin and despair, but condemning his life and manners, and admonishing him, that, unless he repent, he is condemned. (IV, 11:2)

Now this cannot be done without connecting with the office of the ministry a right of summoning those who are to be privately admonished or sharply rebuked, a right, moreover, of keeping back from the communion of the Lord's Supper, those who cannot be admitted without

profaning this high ordinance. Hence, when Paul elsewhere asks, “What have I to do to judge them also that are without?” (1 Cor. 5:12), he makes the members of the Church subject to censures for the correction of their vices, and intimates the existence of tribunals from which no believer is exempted. (IV, 11:5)

Then does doctrine obtain force and authority, not only when the minister publicly expounds to all what they owe to Christ, but has the right and means of exacting this from those whom he may observe to be sluggish or disobedient to his doctrine. Should any one either perversely reject such admonitions, or by persisting in his faults, show that he contemns them, the injunction of Christ is, that after he has been a second time admonished before witnesses, he is to be summoned to the bar of the Church, which is the consistory of elders, and there admonished more sharply, as by public authority, that if he reverence the Church he may submit and obey (Mt. 18:15, 17). If even in this way he is not subdued, but persists in his iniquity, he is then, as a despiser of the Church, to be debarred from the society of believers. (IV, 12:2)

Another distinction to be attended to is, that some sins are mere delinquencies, others crimes and flagrant iniquities. In correcting the latter, it is necessary to employ not only admonition or rebuke, but a sharper remedy, as Paul shows when he not only verbally rebukes the incestuous Corinthian, but punishes him with excommunication, as soon as he was informed of his crime (1 Cor. 5:4). Now then we begin better to perceive how the spiritual jurisdiction of the Church, which animadverts on sins according to the word of the Lord, is at once the best help to sound doctrine, the best foundation of order, and the best bond of unity. Therefore, when the Church banishes from its fellowship open adulterers, fornicators, thieves, robbers, the seditious, the perjured, false witnesses, and others of that description; likewise the contumacious, who, when duly admonished for lighter faults, hold God and his tribunal in derision, instead of arrogating to itself anything that is unreasonable, it exercises a jurisdiction which it has received from the Lord. (IV, 12:4)

There are three ends to which the Church has respect in thus correcting and excommunicating. The first is, that God may not be insulted by the

name of Christians being given to those who lead shameful and flagitious lives, ... Therefore that there may be nothing in the Church to bring disgrace on his sacred name, those whose turpitude might throw infamy on the name must be expelled from his family. (IV, 12:5)

And here, also, regard must be had to the Lord's Supper, which might be profaned by a promiscuous admission. For it is most true, that he who is entrusted with the dispensation of it, if he knowingly and willingly admits any unworthy person whom he ought and is able to repel, is as guilty of sacrilege as if he had cast the Lord's body to dogs.... lest this most sacred mystery should be exposed to ignominy, great selection is required in dispensing it, and this cannot be except by the jurisdiction of the Church. (IV, 12:5)

It is not sufficient verbally to rebuke him who, by some open act of evil example, has grievously offended the Church; but he ought for a time to be denied the communion of the Supper, until he gives proof of repentance. Paul does not merely administer a verbal rebuke to the Corinthian, but discards him from the Church, and reprimands the Corinthians for having borne with him so long (1 Cor. 5:5). (IV, 12:6)

Nay, they ought rather to wish the priests not to spare them, in order that the Lord may spare. I here say nothing as to those by whom the jurisdiction ought to be exercised, because it has been said elsewhere (Chap. 11 sec. 5, 6). I only add, that the legitimate course to be taken in excommunication, as shown by Paul, is not for the elders alone to act apart from others, but with the knowledge and approbation of the Church, so that the body of the people, without regulating the procedure, may, as witnesses and guardians, observe it, and prevent the few from doing anything capriciously. Throughout the whole procedure, in addition to invocation of the name of God, there should be a gravity bespeaking the presence of Christ, and leaving no room to doubt that he is presiding over his own tribunal. (IV, 12:7)

10. Excommunication is Not Damnation

Such as have, therefore, been expelled from the Church, it belongs not to us to expunge from the number of the elect, or to despair of, as if they were

already lost. We may lawfully judge them aliens from the Church, and so aliens from Christ, but only during the time of their excommunication. If then, also, they give greater evidence of petulance than of humility, still let us commit them to the judgment of the Lord, hoping better of them in future than we see at present, and not ceasing to pray to God for them. And (to sum up in one word) let us not consign to destruction their person, which is in the hand, and subject to the decision, of the Lord alone; but let us merely estimate the character of each man's acts according to the law of the Lord. In following this rule, we abide by the divine judgment rather than give any judgment of our own. Let us not arrogate to ourselves greater liberty in judging, if we would not limit the power of God, and give the law to his mercy. Whenever it seems good to Him, the worst are changed into the best; aliens are ingrafted, and strangers are adopted into the Church. This the Lord does, that he may disappoint the thoughts of men, and confound their rashness; a rashness which, if not curbed, would usurp a power of judging to which it has no title. (IV, 12:9)

For when our Saviour promises that what his servants bound on earth should be bound in heaven (Mt. 18:18), he confines the power of binding to the censure of the Church, which does not consign those who are excommunicated to perpetual ruin and damnation, but assures them, when they hear their life and manners condemned, that perpetual damnation will follow if they do not repent. Excommunication ... rebukes and animadverts upon his manners; and although it also punishes, it is to bring him to salvation, by forewarning him of his future doom. (IV, 12:10)

11. Authority of the Clergy

We see the mode of doing it expressed; the preaching of celestial doctrine is committed to pastors. We see that all without exception are brought into the same order, that they may with meek and docile spirit allow themselves to be governed by teachers appointed for this purpose.... But as anciently he did not confine himself to the law merely, but added priests as interpreters, from whose lips the people might inquire after his true meaning, so in the present day he would not only have us to be attentive to reading, but has appointed masters to give us their assistance. In this there is a twofold advantage. For, on the one hand, he by an admirable test

proves our obedience when we listen to his ministers just as we would to himself; ... How well this familiar mode of teaching is suited to us all the godly are aware, from the dread with which the divine majesty justly inspires them. Those who think that the authority of the doctrine is impaired by the insignificance of the men who are called to teach, betray their ingratitude; for among the many noble endowments with which God has adorned the human race, one of the most remarkable is, that he deigns to consecrate the mouths and tongues of men to his service, making his own voice to be heard in them. Wherefore, let us not on our part decline obediently to embrace the doctrine of salvation, delivered by his command and mouth; because, although the power of God is not confined to external means, he has, however, confined us to his ordinary method of teaching, which method, when fanatics refuse to observe, they entangle themselves in many fatal snares.... Wherefore, in order that the pure simplicity of the faith may flourish among us, let us not decline to use this exercise of piety, which God by his institution of it has shown to be necessary, and which he so highly recommends. None, even among the most petulant of men, would venture to say, that we are to shut our ears against God, but in all ages prophets and pious teachers have had a difficult contest to maintain with the ungodly, whose perverseness cannot submit to the yoke of being taught by the lips and ministry of men. (IV, 1:5)

But when a feeble man, sprung from the dust, speaks in the name of God, we give the best proof of our piety and obedience, by listening with docility to his servant, though not in any respect our superior. Accordingly, he hides the treasure of his heavenly wisdom in frail earthen vessels (2 Cor. 4:7), that he may have a more certain proof of the estimation in which it is held by us. Moreover, nothing was fitter to cherish mutual charity than to bind men together by this tie, appointing one of them as a pastor to teach the others who are enjoined to be disciples, and receive the common doctrine from a single mouth. (IV, 3:1)

By these words he shows that the ministry of men, which God employs in governing the Church, is a principal bond by which believers are kept together in one body. He also intimates, that the Church cannot be kept safe, unless supported by those guards to which the Lord has been pleased to commit its safety.... Whoever, therefore, studies to abolish this order

and kind of government of which we speak, or disparages it as of minor importance, plots the devastation, or rather the ruin and destruction, of the Church. For neither are the light and heat of the sun, nor meat and drink, so necessary to sustain and cherish the present life, as is the apostolical and pastoral office to preserve a Church in the earth. (IV, 3:2)

These and similar passages should have the effect of preventing that method of governing and maintaining the Church by ministers, a method which the Lord has ratified for ever, from seeming worthless in our eyes, and at length becoming obsolete by contempt. How very necessary it is, he has declared not only by words but also by examples. (IV, 3:3)

Nor is this a human invention. It is an ordinance of God. For we read that Paul and Barnabas appointed presbyters over each of the churches of Lystra, Antioch, and Iconium (Acts 14:23); and Paul himself enjoins Titus to ordain presbyters in every town (Tit. 1:5). (IV, 3:7)

From the beginning, therefore, each church had its senate, composed of pious, grave, and venerable men, in whom was lodged the power of correcting faults. Of this power we shall afterwards speak. Moreover, experience shows that this arrangement was not confined to one age, and therefore we are to regard the office of government as necessary for all ages. (IV, 3:8)

Let no man, however, understand me as if I were desirous in everything rashly and unreservedly to overthrow the authority of pastors. (IV, 9:5)

12. Pastors Are Called and in Some Sense “Ordained”

Now seeing that in the sacred assembly all things ought to be done decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40), there is nothing in which this ought to be more carefully observed than in settling government, irregularity in any respect being nowhere more perilous. Wherefore, lest restless and turbulent men should presumptuously push themselves forward to teach or rule (an event which actually was to happen), it was expressly provided that no one should assume a public office in the Church without a call (Heb. 5:4; Jer. 17:16). Therefore, if any one would be deemed a true minister of the

Church, he must *first* be duly called; and, *secondly*, he must answer to his calling; that is, undertake and execute the office assigned to him. This may often be observed in Paul, who, when he would approve his apostleship, almost always alleges a call, together with his fidelity in discharging the office. (IV, 3:10)

The subject is comprehended under four heads—viz. *who* are to be appointed ministers, *in what way*, *by whom*, and *with what rite or initiatory ceremony*. I am speaking of the external and formal call which relates to the public order of the Church, while I say nothing of that secret call of which every minister is conscious before God, but has not the Church as a witness of it; I mean, the good testimony of our heart, that we undertake the offered office neither from ambition nor avarice, nor any other selfish feeling, but a sincere fear of God and desire to edify the Church. This, as I have said, is indeed necessary for every one of us, if we would approve our ministry to God. Still, however, a man may have been duly called by the Church, though he may have accepted with a bad conscience, provided his wickedness is not manifest. It is usual also to say, that private men are called to the ministry when they seem fit and apt to discharge it; that is, because learning, conjoined with piety and the other endowments of a good pastor, is a kind of preparation for the office. (IV, 3:11)

It remains to consider the form of ordination, to which we have assigned the last place in the call (see chap. 4, sec. 14, 15). It is certain, that when the apostles appointed any one to the ministry, they used no other ceremony than the laying on of hands. This form was derived, I think, from the custom of the Jews, who, by the laying on of hands, in a manner presented to God whatever they wished to be blessed and consecrated. Thus Jacob, when about to bless Ephraim and Manasseh, placed his hands upon their heads (Gen. 48:14). The same thing was done by our Lord, when he prayed over the little children (Mt. 19:15). With the same intent (as I imagine), the Jews, according to the injunction of the law, laid hands upon their sacrifices. Wherefore, the apostles, by the laying on of hands, intimated that they made an offering to God of him whom they admitted to the ministry; though they also did the same thing over those on whom they conferred the visible gifts of the Spirit (Acts 8:17; 19:6). However this be, it was the regular form, whenever they called any one to the sacred

ministry. In this way they consecrated pastors and teachers; in this way they consecrated deacons. But though there is no fixed precept concerning the laying on of hands, yet as we see that it was uniformly observed by the apostles, this careful observance ought to be regarded by us in the light of a precept (see chap. 14, sec. 20; chap. 19, sec. 31). And it is certainly useful, that by such a symbol the dignity of the ministry should be commended to the people, and he who is ordained, reminded that he is no longer his own, but is bound in service to God and the Church. Besides, it will not prove an empty sign, if it be restored to its genuine origin. For if the Spirit of God has not instituted anything in the Church in vain, this ceremony of his appointment we shall feel not to be useless, provided it be not superstitiously abused. Lastly, it is to be observed, that it was not the whole people, but only pastors, who laid hands on ministers, though it is uncertain whether or not several always laid their hands: it is certain, that in the case of the deacons, it was done by Paul and Barnabas, and some few others (Acts 6:6; 13:3). But in another place, Paul mentions that he himself, without any others, laid hands on Timothy. “Wherefore, I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands” (2 Tim. 1:6). For what is said in the First Epistle, of the *laying on of the hands of the presbytery*, I do not understand as if Paul were speaking of the college of Elders. By the expression, I understand the ordination itself; as if he had said, Act so, that the gift which you received by the laying on of hands, when I made you a presbyter, may not be in vain. (IV, 3:16)

13. Pastors Are in Some Sense Successors of the Apostles

[A]ll ecclesiastical officers may be properly called apostles, because they are all sent by the Lord and are his messengers ... pastors (except that each has the government of a particular church assigned to him) have the same function as apostles. The nature of this function let us now see still more clearly. (IV, 3:5)

Such is the sacred, inviolable, and perpetual law, enjoined on those who succeed to the place of the apostles,—they receive a commission to preach

the Gospel and administer the sacraments. Whence we infer that those who neglect both of these falsely pretend to the office of apostles. But what shall we say of pastors? Paul speaks not of himself only but of all pastors, when he says, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God" (I Cor. 4:1).... What Paul says of himself is applicable to all pastors: "For though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel" (I Cor. 4:16). In short, what the apostles did to the whole world, every pastor should do to the flock over which he is appointed. (IV, 3:6)

Therefore, it is here necessary to remember, that whatever authority and dignity the Holy Spirit in Scripture confers on priests, or prophets, or apostles, or successors of Apostles, is wholly given not to men themselves, but to the ministry to which they are appointed; or, to speak more plainly, to the word, to the ministry of which they are appointed. For were we to go over the whole in order, we should find that they were not invested with authority to teach or give responses, save in the name and word of the Lord. For whenever they are called to office, they are enjoined not to bring anything of their own, but to speak by the mouth of the Lord. (IV, 8:2)

14. The Primacy of Peter Among the Disciples

One was chief among the apostles, ... That twelve had one among them to direct all is nothing strange. Nature admits, the human mind requires, that in every meeting, though all are equal in power, there should be one as a kind of moderator to whom the others should look up. There is no senate without a consul, no bench of judges without a president or chancellor, no college without a provost, no company without a master. Thus there would be no absurdity were we to confess that the apostles had conferred such a primacy on Peter. (IV, 6:8)

15. Apostolic Deposit: Nothing Essential Ever Added

But when at length the Wisdom of God was manifested in the flesh, he fully unfolded to us all that the human mind can comprehend, or ought to

think of the heavenly Father. Now, therefore, since Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, has arisen, we have the perfect refulgence of divine truth, like the brightness of noon-day, whereas the light was previously dim. It was no ordinary blessing which the apostle intended to publish when he wrote: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Heb. 1:1, 2); for he intimates, nay, openly declares, that God will not henceforth, as formerly, speak by this one and by that one, that he will not add prophecy to prophecy, or revelation to revelation, but has so completed all the parts of teaching in the Son, that it is to be regarded as his last and eternal testimony. For which reason, the whole period of the new dispensation, from the time when Christ appeared to us with the preaching of his Gospel, until the day of judgment, is designated by the *last hour, the last times, the last days*, that, contented with the perfection of Christ's doctrine, we may learn to frame no new doctrine for ourselves, or admit any one devised by others. (IV, 8:7)

We conclude, therefore, that it does not now belong to faithful ministers to coin some new doctrine, but simply to adhere to the doctrine to which all, without exception, are made subject. When I say this, I mean to show not only what each individual, but what the whole Church, is bound to do.... the reason to which we ought here to have regard is universal: God deprives man of the power of producing any new doctrine, in order that he alone may be our master in spiritual teaching, as he alone is true, and can neither lie nor deceive. This reason applies not less to the whole Church than to every individual believer. (IV, 8:9)

Having proved that no power was given to the Church to set up any new doctrine, ... (IV, 9:13)

16. Sacred, Passed-Down Tradition in Some Sense

From this fountain Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and others, drew all the heavenly doctrine which they possessed. From the same fountain all the prophets also drew all the heavenly oracles which they published. For this wisdom did not always display itself in one manner. With the patriarchs he employed secret revelations, but, at the same time, in order

to confirm these, had recourse to signs so as to make it impossible for them to doubt that it was God that spake to them. What the patriarchs received they handed down to posterity, for God had, in depositing it with them, bound them thus to propagate it, while their children and descendants knew by the inward teaching of God, that what they heard was of heaven and not of earth. (IV, 8:5)

But when God determined to give a more illustrious form to the Church, he was pleased to commit and consign his word to writing, that the priests might there seek what they were to teach the people, and every doctrine delivered be brought to it as a test (Mal. 2:7). Accordingly, after the promulgation of the Law, when the priests are enjoined to teach from the mouth of the Lord, the meaning is, that they are not to teach anything extraneous or alien to that kind of doctrine which God had summed up in the Law, while it was unlawful for them to add to it or take from it. Next followed the prophets, by whom God published the new oracles which were added to the Law, not so new, however, but that they flowed from the Law, and had respect to it. For in so far as regards doctrine, they were only interpreters of the Law, adding nothing to it but predictions of future events. (IV, 8:6)

But if this guardianship consists in the ministry of the Prophets and Apostles, it follows, that the whole depends upon this—viz. that the word of the Lord is faithfully preserved and maintained in purity. (IV, 8:12)

17. Development of Doctrine

Does not the law which was once given to the Church endure for ever? “What things soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it” (Deut. 12:32). And in another place, “Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Prov. 30:6). Since they cannot deny that this was said to the Church, what else do they proclaim but their contumacy, when, notwithstanding of such prohibitions, they profess to add to the doctrine of God, and dare to intermingle their own with it?... the whole Church is forbidden to add to, or take from the word of God, in relation to his worship and salutary precepts. But that was said merely of the Law, which was succeeded by the

Prophets and the whole Gospel dispensation! This I admit, but I at the same time add, that these are fulfilments of the Law, rather than additions or diminutions. Now, if the Lord does not permit anything to be added to, or taken from the ministry of Moses, though wrapt up, if I may so speak, in many folds of obscurity, until he furnish a clearer doctrine by his servants the Prophets, and at last by his beloved Son, why should we not suppose that we are much more strictly prohibited from making any addition to the Law, the Prophets, the Psalms, and the Gospel? The Lord cannot forget himself, and it is long since he declared that nothing is so offensive to him as to be worshipped by human inventions. (IV, 10:17)

18. Holy and Sacred Places

It was inconsiderate in Xerxes when, by the advice of the magians, he burnt or pulled down all the temples of Greece, because he thought it absurd that God, to whom all things ought to be free and open, should be enclosed by walls and roofs, as if it were not in the power of God in a manner to descend to us, that he may be near to us, and yet neither change his place nor affect us by earthly means, but rather, by a kind of vehicles, raise us aloft to his own heavenly glory, which, with its immensity, fills all things, and in height is above the heavens. (IV, 1:5)

19. Sinners in the Visible Church

In this Church there is a very large mixture of hypocrites, who have nothing of Christ but the name and outward appearance: of ambitious, avaricious, envious, evil-speaking men, some also of impurer lives, who are tolerated for a time, either because their guilt cannot be legally established, or because due strictness of discipline is not always observed. Hence, as it is necessary to believe the invisible Church, which is manifest to the eye of God only, so we are also enjoined to regard this Church which is so called with reference to man, and to cultivate its communion. (IV, 1:7)

For it may happen in practice that those whom we deem not altogether worthy of the fellowship of believers, we yet ought to treat as brethren, and regard as believers, on account of the common consent of the Church in tolerating and bearing with them in the body of Christ. Such persons we do

not approve by our suffrage as members of the Church, but we leave them the place which they hold among the people of God, until they are legitimately deprived of it. (IV, 1:9)

When we say that the pure ministry of the word and pure celebration of the sacraments is a fit pledge and earnest, so that we may safely recognise a church in every society in which both exist, our meaning is, that we are never to discard it so long as these remain, though it may otherwise teem with numerous faults. (IV, 1:12)

Still those of whom we have spoken sin in their turn, by not knowing how to set bounds to their offence. For where the Lord requires mercy they omit it, and give themselves up to immoderate severity. Thinking there is no church where there is not complete purity and integrity of conduct, they, through hatred of wickedness, withdraw from a genuine church, while they think they are shunning the company of the ungodly. They allege that the Church of God is holy. But that they may at the same time understand that it contains a mixture of good and bad, let them hear from the lips of our Saviour that parable in which he compares the Church to a net in which all kinds of fishes are taken, but not separated until they are brought ashore. Let them hear it compared to a field which, planted with good seed, is by the fraud of an enemy mingled with tares, and is not freed of them until the harvest is brought into the barn. Let them hear, in fine, that it is a thrashing-floor in which the collected wheat lies concealed under the chaff, until, cleansed by the fanners and the sieve, it is at length laid up in the granary. If the Lord declares that the Church will labour under the defect of being burdened with a multitude of wicked until the day of judgment, it is in vain to look for a church altogether free from blemish (Mt. 13). (IV, 1:13)

They exclaim that it is impossible to tolerate the vice which everywhere stalks abroad like a pestilence. What if the apostle's sentiment applies here also? Among the Corinthians it was not a few that erred, but almost the whole body had become tainted; there was not one species of sin merely, but a multitude, and those not trivial errors, but some of them execrable crimes. There was not only corruption in manners, but also in doctrine. What course was taken by the holy apostle, in other words, by the organ of

the heavenly Spirit, by whose testimony the Church stands and falls? Does he seek separation from them? Does he discard them from the kingdom of Christ? Does he strike them with the thunder of a final anathema? He not only does none of these things, but he acknowledges and heralds them as a Church of Christ, and a society of saints. If the Church remains among the Corinthians, where envyings, divisions, and contentions rage; where quarrels, lawsuits, and avarice prevail; where a crime, which even the Gentiles would execrate, is openly approved; where the name of Paul, whom they ought to have honoured as a father, is petulantly assailed; where some hold the resurrection of the dead in derision, though with it the whole gospel must fall; where the gifts of God are made subservient to ambition, not to charity; where many things are done neither decently nor in order: If there the Church still remains, simply because the ministration of word and sacrament is not rejected, who will presume to deny the title of church to those to whom a tenth part of these crimes cannot be imputed? How, I ask, would those who act so morosely against present churches have acted to the Galatians, who had done all but abandon the gospel (Gal. 1:6), and yet among them the same apostle found churches? (IV, 1:14)

But although the Church fail in her duty, it does not therefore follow that every private individual is to decide the question of separation for himself. I deny not that it is the duty of a pious man to withdraw from all private intercourse with the wicked, and not entangle himself with them by any voluntary tie; but it is one thing to shun the society of the wicked, and another to renounce the communion of the Church through hatred of them. (IV, 1:15)

Since they also argue that there is good reason for the Church being called holy, it is necessary to consider what the holiness is in which it excels, lest by refusing to acknowledge any church, save one that is completely perfect, we leave no church at all. It is true, indeed, as Paul says, that Christ “loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:25–27). (IV, 1:17)

Well, therefore, does Cyprian say, “Although tares or unclean vessels are seen in the Church, that is no reason why we ourselves should withdraw from the Church; we must only labour that we may be able to be wheat; we must give our endeavour, and strive as far as we can, to be vessels of gold or silver. But to break the earthen vessels belongs to the Lord alone, to whom a rod of iron has been given: let no one arrogate to himself what is peculiar to the Son alone, and think himself sufficient to winnow the floor and cleanse the chaff, and separate all the tares by human judgment. What depraved zeal thus assumes to itself is proud obstinacy and sacrilegious presumption” (Cyprian, Lib. 3 Ep. 5). Let both points, therefore, be regarded as fixed; *first*, that there is no excuse for him who spontaneously abandons the external communion of a church in which the word of God is preached and the sacraments are administered; *secondly*, that notwithstanding of the faults of a few or of many, there is nothing to prevent us from there duly professing our faith in the ordinances instituted by God, because a pious conscience is not injured by the unworthiness of another, whether he be a pastor or a private individual; and sacred rites are not less pure and salutary to a man who is holy and upright, from being at the same time handled by the impure. (IV, 1:19)

Their moroseness and pride proceed even to greater lengths. Refusing to acknowledge any church that is not pure from the minutest blemish, ... (IV, 1:20)

What shall we say to the fact, that occasionally whole churches have been implicated in the grossest sins, and yet Paul, instead of giving them over to destruction, rather mercifully extricated them? The defection of the Galatians was no trivial fault; the Corinthians were still less excusable, the iniquities prevailing among them being more numerous and not less heinous, yet neither are excluded from the mercy of the Lord. Nay, the very persons who had sinned above others in uncleanness and fornication are expressly invited to repentance. The covenant of the Lord remains, and ever will remain, inviolable, that covenant which he solemnly ratified with Christ the true Solomon, and his members, in these words: “If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with

the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him” (Ps. 89:30–33). (IV, 1:27)

[F]or we have shown, first, that wherever it exists entire and unimpaired, no errors of conduct, no defects should prevent us from giving the name of Church; ... (IV, 2:1)

20. Denominations and Schism Ruled Out

Hence the Church is called Catholic or Universal (August. Ep. 48), for two or three cannot be invented without dividing Christ; and this is impossible. All the elect of God are so joined together in Christ, that as they depend on one head, so they are as it were compacted into one body, being knit together like its different members; made truly one by living together under the same Spirit of God in one faith, hope, and charity, called not only to the same inheritance of eternal life, but to participation in one God and Christ. (IV, 1:2)

Still a community is asserted, such as Luke describes when he says, “The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul” (Acts 4:32); and Paul, when he reminds the Ephesians, “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling” (Eph. 4:4). For if they are truly persuaded that God is the common Father of them all, and Christ their common head, they cannot but be united together in brotherly love, and mutually impart their blessings to each other. (IV, 1:3)

Pride, or fastidiousness, or emulation, induces many to persuade themselves that they can profit sufficiently by reading and meditating in private, and thus to despise public meetings, and deem preaching superfluous. But since as much as in them lies they loose or burst the sacred bond of unity, none of them escapes the just punishment of this impious divorce, but become fascinated with pestiferous errors, and the foulest delusions.... For no other reason were believers anciently enjoined to seek the face of God in the sanctuary (Ps. 105:4) (an injunction so often repeated in the Law), than because the doctrine of the Law, and the exhortations of the prophets, were to them a living image of God. Thus Paul declares, that in his preaching the glory of God shone in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6). The more detestable are the apostates who

delight in producing schisms in churches, just as if they wished to drive the sheep from the fold, and throw them into the jaws of wolves. (IV, 1:5)

[W]hen the preaching of the gospel is reverently heard, and the sacraments are not neglected, there for the time the face of the Church appears without deception or ambiguity and no man may with impunity spurn her authority, or reject her admonitions, or resist her counsels, or make sport of her censures, far less revolt from her, and violate her unity (see Chap. 2 sec. 1, 10, and Chap. 8 sec. 12). For such is the value which the Lord sets on the communion of his Church, that all who contumaciously alienate themselves from any Christian society, in which the true ministry of his word and sacraments is maintained, he regards as deserters of religion.... Moreover, no mean praise is conferred on the Church when she is said to have been chosen and set apart by Christ as his spouse, “not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing” (Eph. 5:27), as “his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:23). Whence it follows, that revolt from the Church is denial of God and Christ. Wherefore there is the more necessity to beware of a dissent so iniquitous; for seeing by it we aim as far as in us lies at the destruction of God’s truth, we deserve to be crushed by the full thunder of his anger. No crime can be imagined more atrocious than that of sacrilegiously and perfidiously violating the sacred marriage which the only begotten Son of God has condescended to contract with us. (IV, 1:10)

How perilous, then, nay, how fatal the temptation, when we even entertain a thought of separating ourselves from that assembly in which are beheld the signs and badges which the Lord has deemed sufficient to characterise his Church! We see how great caution should be employed in both respects. That we may not be imposed upon by the name of Church, every congregation which claims the name must be brought to that test as to a Lydian stone. (IV, 1:11)

Accordingly, those who are the most forward, and, as it were, leaders in producing revolt from the Church, have, for the most part, no other motive than to display their own superiority by despising all other men. Well and wisely, therefore, does Augustine say, “Seeing that pious reason and the mode of ecclesiastical discipline ought specially to regard the unity of the

Spirit in the bond of peace, which the Apostle enjoins us to keep, by bearing with one another (for if we keep it not, the application of medicine is not only superfluous, but pernicious, and therefore proves to be no medicine); those bad sons who, not from hatred of other men's iniquities, but zeal for their own contentions, attempt altogether to draw away, or at least to divide, weak brethren ensnared by the glare of their name, while swollen with pride, stuffed with petulance, insidiously calumnious, and turbulently seditious, use the cloak of a rigorous severity, that they may not seem devoid of the light of truth, and pervert to sacrilegious schism, and purposes of excision, those things which are enjoined in the Holy Scriptures (due regard being had to sincere love, and the unity of peace), to correct a brother's faults by the appliance of a moderate cure" (August. Cont. Parmen. cap. 1). To the pious and placid his advice is, mercifully to correct what they can, and to bear patiently with what they cannot correct, in love lamenting and mourning until God either reform or correct, or at the harvest root up the tares, and scatter the chaff (Ibid. cap. 2). Let all the godly study to provide themselves with these weapons, lest, while they deem themselves strenuous and ardent defenders of righteousness, they revolt from the kingdom of heaven, which is the only kingdom of righteousness. For as God has been pleased that the communion of his Church shall be maintained in this external society, any one who, from hatred of the ungodly, violates the bond of this society, enters on a downward course, in which he incurs great danger of cutting himself off from the communion of saints. Let them reflect, that in a numerous body there are several who may escape their notice, and yet are truly righteous and innocent in the eyes of the Lord. Let them reflect, that of those who seem diseased, there are many who are far from taking pleasure or flattering themselves in their faults, and who, ever and anon aroused by a serious fear of the Lord, aspire to greater integrity. Let them reflect, that they have no right to pass judgment on a man for one act, since the holiest sometimes make the most grievous fall. Let them reflect, that in the ministry of the word and participation of the sacraments, the power to collect the Church is too great to be deprived of all its efficacy, by the fault of some ungodly men. Lastly, let them reflect, that in estimating the Church, divine is of more force than human judgment. (IV, 1:16)

In the people, the rulers, and the priests, corruption prevailed to such a degree, that Isaiah hesitates not to liken Jerusalem to Sodom and Gomorrah (Isa. 1:10). Religion was partly despised, partly adulterated, while in regard to morals, we everywhere meet with accounts of theft, robbery, perfidy, murder, and similar crimes. The prophets, however, did not therefore either form new churches for themselves, or erect new altars on which they might have separate sacrifices, but whatever their countrymen might be, reflecting that the Lord had deposited his word with them, and instituted the ceremonies by which he was then worshipped, they stretched out pure hands to him, though amid the company of the ungodly. Certainly, had they thought that they thereby contracted any pollution, they would have died a hundred deaths sooner than suffered themselves to be dragged thither. Nothing, therefore, prevented them from separating themselves, but a desire of preserving unity. But if the holy prophets felt no obligation to withdraw from the Church on account of the very numerous and heinous crimes, not of one or two individuals, but almost of the whole people, we arrogate too much to ourselves, if we presume forthwith to withdraw from the communion of the Church, because the lives of all accord not with our judgment, or even with the Christian profession. (IV, 1:18)

Similar, in the present day, is the conduct of the Anabaptists, who, acknowledging no assembly of Christ unless conspicuous in all respects for angelic perfection, under pretence of zeal overthrow everything which tends to edification. "Such (says Augustin. contra Parmen. Lib. 3 c. 4), not from hatred of other men's iniquity, but zeal for their own disputes, ensnaring the weak by the credit of their name, attempt to draw them entirely away, or at least to separate them; swollen with pride, raving with petulance, insidious in calumny, turbulent in sedition. That it may not be seen how void they are of the light of truth, they cover themselves with the shadow of a stern severity: the correction of a brother's fault, which in Scripture is enjoined to be done with moderation, without impairing the sincerity of love or breaking the bond of peace, they pervert to sacrilegious schism and purposes of excision. Thus Satan transforms himself into an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14) when, under pretext of a just severity, he persuades to savage cruelty, desiring nothing more than to violate and

burst the bond of unity and peace; because, when it is maintained, all his power of mischief is feeble, his wily traps are broken, and his schemes of subversion vanish.” (IV, 12:12)

21. Roman Primacy in Some Sense in the Early Church

I deny not that the early Christians uniformly give high honour to the Roman Church, and speak of it with reverence. This, I think, is owing chiefly to three causes. The opinion which had prevailed (I know not how), that that Church was founded and constituted by the ministry of Peter, had great effect in procuring influence and authority. Hence, in the East, it was, as a mark of honour, designated the Apostolic See. Secondly, as the seat of empire was there, and it was for this reason to be presumed, that the most distinguished for learning, prudence, skill, and experience, were there more than elsewhere, account was justly taken of the circumstance, lest the celebrity of the city, and the much more excellent gifts of God also, might seem to be despised. To these was added a third cause, that when the churches of the East, of Greece and of Africa, were kept in a constant turmoil by differences of opinion, the Church of Rome was calmer and less troubled. To this it was owing, that pious and holy bishops, when driven from their sees, often betook themselves to Rome as an asylum or haven. For as the people of the West are of a less acute and versatile turn of mind than those of Asia or Africa, so they are less desirous of innovations. It therefore added very great authority to the Roman Church, that in those dubious times it was not so much unsettled as others, and adhered more firmly to the doctrine once delivered, as shall immediately be better explained. For these three causes, I say, she was held in no ordinary estimation, and received many distinguished testimonies from ancient writers. (IV, 6:16)

22. Semblance of Remaining Christianity in Catholicism

Therefore, while we are unwilling simply to concede the name of Church to the Papists, we do not deny that there are churches among them.... In one

word, I call them churches, inasmuch as the Lord there wondrously preserves some remains of his people, though miserably torn and scattered, and inasmuch as some symbols of the Church still remain—symbols especially whose efficacy neither the craft of the devil nor human depravity can destroy. (IV, 2:12)

Chapter Six

VI. Agreement on Salvation (Soteriology), Justification, Sanctification, and the Spiritual Life

1. Good Works as the Necessary Proof of True Saving Faith

Although we have already in some measure shown how faith possesses Christ, and gives us the enjoyment of his benefits, the subject would still be obscure were we not to add an exposition of the effects resulting from it. The sum of the Gospel is, not without good reason, made to consist in repentance and forgiveness of sins; and, therefore, where these two heads are omitted, any discussion concerning faith will be meager and defective, and indeed almost useless. Now, since Christ confers upon us, and we obtain by faith, both free reconciliation and newness of life, reason and order require that I should here begin to treat of both. The shortest transition, however, will be from faith to repentance; for repentance being properly understood it will better appear how a man is justified freely by faith alone, and yet that holiness of life, *real* holiness, as it is called, is inseparable from the free imputation of righteousness. That repentance not only always follows faith, but is produced by it, ought to be without controversy (see Calvin in Joann. 1:13). For since pardon and forgiveness are offered by the preaching of the Gospel, in order that the sinner, delivered from the tyranny of Satan, the yoke of sin, and the miserable bondage of iniquity, may pass into the kingdom of God, it is certain that no man can embrace the grace of the Gospel without retaking himself from the errors of his former life into the right path, and making it his whole study to practice repentance. Those who think that repentance precedes faith instead of flowing from, or being produced by it, as the fruit by the tree, have never understood its nature, and are moved to adopt that view on very insufficient grounds. (III, 3:1)

We can now understand what are the fruits of repentance—viz. offices of piety towards God, and love towards men, general holiness and purity of life. In short, the more a man studies to conform his life to the standard of the divine law, the surer signs he gives of his repentance. Accordingly, the Spirit, in exhorting us to repentance, brings before us at one time each separate precept of the law; at another the duties of the second table; although there are also passages in which, after condemning impurity in its fountain in the heart, he afterwards descends to external marks, by which repentance is proved to be sincere. (III, 3:16)

[D]o we not see that the Lord justifies his people freely, and at the same time renews them to true holiness by the sanctification of his Spirit? (III, 3:19)

But we forbid no believer to confirm and support this faith by the signs of the divine favor towards him. For if when we call to mind the gifts which God has bestowed upon us, they are like rays of the divine countenance, by which we are enabled to behold the highest light of his goodness; much more is this the case with the gift of good works, which shows that we have received the Spirit of adoption. (III, 14:18)

[T]he fruits of their calling convince them that the Lord has admitted them to a place among his children.... the fruits of regeneration furnish them with a proof of the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, ... (III, 14:19)

Our last sentence may refute the impudent calumny of certain ungodly men, who charge us, first, with destroying good works ... The allegation is that justification by faith destroys good works.... that when faith is so highly extolled, works are deprived of their proper place. But what if they are rather ennobled and established? We dream not of a faith which is devoid of good works, nor of a justification which can exist without them: the only difference is, that while we acknowledge that faith and works are necessarily connected, we, however, place justification in faith, not in works.... This faith, however, you cannot apprehend without at the same time apprehending sanctification; for Christ “is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption,” (1 Cor. 1:30). Christ, therefore, justifies no man without also sanctifying him. These blessings are conjoined by a perpetual and inseparable tie. Those whom he

enlightens by his wisdom he redeems; whom he redeems he justifies; whom he justifies he sanctifies. But as the question relates only to justification and sanctification, to them let us confine ourselves. Though we distinguish between them, they are both inseparably comprehended in Christ. Would ye then obtain justification in Christ? You must previously possess Christ. But you cannot possess him without being made a partaker of his sanctification: for Christ cannot be divided. Since the Lord, therefore, does not grant us the enjoyment of these blessings without bestowing himself, he bestows both at once but never the one without the other. Thus it appears how true it is that we are justified not without, and yet not by works, since in the participation of Christ, by which we are justified, is contained not less sanctification than justification. (III, 16:1)

2. Progressive Sanctification

For if we have true fellowship in his death, our old man is crucified by his power, and the body of sin becomes dead, so that the corruption of our original nature is never again in full vigor (Rom. 6:5, 6). If we are partakers in his resurrection, we are raised up by means of it to newness of life, which conforms us to the righteousness of God.... This renewal, indeed, is not accomplished in a moment, a day, or a year, but by uninterrupted, sometimes even by slow progress God abolishes the remains of carnal corruption in his elect, cleanses them from pollution, and consecrates them as his temples, restoring all their inclinations to real purity, so that during their whole lives they may practice repentance, and know that death is the only termination to this warfare.... after Paul, I make the image of God to consist in righteousness and true holiness; as if in every definition it were not necessary to take the thing defined in its integrity and perfection. It is not denied that there is room for improvement; but what I maintain is, that the nearer any one approaches in resemblance to God, the more does the image of God appear in him. (III, 3:9)

[T]he Spirit of the Lord ... is given to us for sanctification, that he may purge us from all iniquity and defilement, and bring us to the obedience of divine righteousness, ... though purged by his sanctification, we are still beset by many vices and much weakness, so long as we are enclosed in the prison of the body. Thus it is, that placed at a great distance from

perfection, we must always be endeavoring to make some progress, and daily struggling with the evil by which we are entangled. Hence, too, it follows, that, shaking off sloth and security, we must be intently vigilant, ... (III, 3:14)

I will begin with the Church, into whose bosom God is pleased to collect his children, not only that by her aid and ministry they may be nourished so long as they are babes and children, but may also be guided by her maternal care until they grow up to manhood, and, finally, attain to the perfection of faith. (IV, 1:1)

Their moroseness and pride proceed even to greater lengths. Refusing to acknowledge any church that is not pure from the minutest blemish, they take offence at sound teachers for exhorting believers to make progress, and so teaching them to groan during their whole lives under the burden of sin, and flee for pardon. For they pretend that in this way believers are led away from perfection. I admit that we are not to labour feebly or coldly in urging perfection, far less to desist from urging it; but I hold that it is a device of the devil to fill our minds with a confident belief of it while we are still in our course. (IV, 1:20)

Nor must we hence assume a licence of sinning for the future (there is certainly nothing in it to countenance such audacity), ... Those who, from hopes of impunity, seek a licence for sin, only provoke the wrath and justice of God. (IV, 15:3)

But let no man deceive himself, let no man look complacently on his disease, when he hears that sin always dwells in us. When we say so, it is not in order that those who are otherwise too prone to sin may sleep securely in their sins, but only that those who are tried and stung by the flesh may not faint and despond. Let them rather reflect that they are still on the way, and think that they have made great progress when they feel that their concupiscence is somewhat diminished from day to day, until they shall have reached the point at which they aim—viz. the final death of the flesh; a death which shall be completed at the termination of this mortal life. (IV, 15:11)

Here we say nothing more than the apostle Paul expounds most clearly in the sixth and seventh chapters of the Epistle to the Romans. He had discoursed of free justification, but as some wicked men thence inferred that they were to live as they listed, because their acceptance with God was not procured by the merit of works, he adds, that all who are clothed with the righteousness of Christ are at the same time regenerated by the Spirit, and that we have an earnest of this regeneration in baptism. Hence he exhorts believers not to allow sin to reign in their members. (IV, 15:12)

3. Only God Absolutely Knows Who is Among the Elect

Wherefore, although I am unwilling to dispute about words, yet I would rather keep to the proper form, as better fitted to express the thing that is meant, than affect terms by which the meaning is causelessly obscured. The object of the expression is to teach us, that though the devil leaves no stone unturned in order to destroy the grace of Christ, and the enemies of God rush with insane violence in the same direction, it cannot be extinguished,—the blood of Christ cannot be rendered barren, and prevented from producing fruit. Hence, regard must be had both to the secret election and to the internal calling of God, because he alone “knoweth them that are his” (2 Tim. 2:19); and as Paul expresses it, holds them as it were enclosed under his seal, although, at the same time, they wear his insignia, and are thus distinguished from the reprobate. (IV, 1:2)

Nor is our faith the worse for apprehending what is unknown, since we are not enjoined here to distinguish between the elect and the reprobate (this belongs not to us, but to God only), but to feel firmly assured in our minds, that all those who, by the mercy of God the Father, through the efficacy of the Holy Spirit, have become partakers with Christ, are set apart as the proper and peculiar possession of God, and that as we are of the number, we are also partakers of this great grace. (IV, 1:3)

Accordingly, inasmuch as it was of importance to us to recognise it, the Lord has distinguished it by certain marks, and as it were symbols. It is, indeed, the special prerogative of God to know those who are his, as Paul declares in the passage already quoted (2 Tim. 2:19). And doubtless it has

been so provided as a check on human rashness, the experience of every day reminding us how far his secret judgments surpass our apprehension. For even those who seemed most abandoned, and who had been completely despaired of, are by his goodness recalled to life, while those who seemed most stable often fall. Hence, as Augustine says, “In regard to the secret predestination of God, there are very many sheep without, and very many wolves within” (August. Hom. in Joan. 45). For he knows, and has his mark on those who know neither him nor themselves. Of those again who openly bear his badge, his eyes alone see who of them are unfeignedly holy, and will persevere even to the end, which alone is the completion of salvation. On the other hand, foreseeing that it was in some degree expedient for us to know who are to be regarded by us as his sons, he has in this matter accommodated himself to our capacity. But as here full certainty was not necessary, he has in its place substituted the judgment of charity, by which we acknowledge all as members of the Church who by confession of faith, regularity of conduct, and participation in the sacraments, unite with us in acknowledging the same God and Christ. (IV, 1:8)

Such as have, therefore, been expelled from the Church, it belongs not to us to expunge from the number of the elect, or to despair of, as if they were already lost. (IV, 12:9)

4. Cooperation With God’s Grace (Synergism) and Merit

Some, with equal unskilfulness, wrest the saying of Paul, “We are labourers together with God,” (1 Cor. 3:9). There cannot be a doubt that these words apply to ministers only, who are called “labourers with God,” not from bringing any thing of their own, but because God makes use of their instrumentality after he has rendered them fit, and provided them with the necessary endowments. (II, 5:17)

The apostles, therefore, exert the power of the Spirit in their preaching, inasmuch as God uses them as instruments which he has ordained for the unfolding of his spiritual grace. Still, however, we must not lose sight of the

distinction, but remember what man is able of himself to do, and what is peculiar to God. (IV, 14:11)

5. St. Paul as God's Co-Worker

In short, in several passages he ... makes himself a fellow-worker with God, ... (1 Cor. 3:9). All these things he certainly never uttered with the view of attributing to himself one iota apart from God, as he elsewhere briefly explains.... God, in ascribing to himself the illumination of the mind and renewal of the heart, reminds us that it is sacrilege for man to claim any part of either to himself. (IV, 1:6)

For when he would remind the Corinthians how God had given effect to his labours, he boasts that he possessed the ministry of the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:4); just as if his preaching were inseparably connected with the power of the Holy Spirit, in inwardly enlightening the mind, and stimulating it. (IV, 14:11)

For it corresponds admirably with the Apostle's design to understand him to mean, that, while it is peculiarly the work of God to build his temple, or cultivate his vineyard, he calls forth ministers to be *fellow-laborers*, by means of whom He alone works; but, at the same time, in such a way, that they in their turn labor in common with him. (*Commentary on 1 Corinthians* [3:9], translated by John Pringle)

6. St. Paul and Others as Distributors of God's Salvation

In short, in several passages he ... attributes to himself the province of bestowing salvation (1 Cor. 3:9). All these things he certainly never uttered with the view of attributing to himself one iota apart from God, as he elsewhere briefly explains.... God, in ascribing to himself the illumination of the mind and renewal of the heart, reminds us that it is sacrilege for man to claim any part of either to himself. (IV, 1:6)

... other creatures which the divine liberality and kindness has destined for our use, and by whose instrumentality he bestows the gifts of his goodness upon us ... (IV, 14:12)

7. Acknowledgment of the Existence of “Good” Persons

Still, however, even the good are sometimes affected by this inconsiderate zeal for righteousness, ... (IV, 1:16)

8. Approximation of Catholic “Baptism of Desire”

But there is a danger that he who is sick may be deprived of the gift of regeneration if he decease without baptism! By no means. Our children, before they are born, God declares that he adopts for his own when he promises that he will be a God to us, and to our seed after us. In this promise their salvation is included. None will dare to offer such an insult to God as to deny that he is able to give effect to his promise. (IV, 15:20)

But this controversy will at once be disposed of when we maintain, that children who happen to depart this life before an opportunity of immersing them in water, are not excluded from the kingdom of heaven. (IV, 15:22)

This, moreover, plainly explodes the fiction of those who consign all the unbaptised to eternal death.... We nowhere read of his having condemned him who was not yet baptised. I would not be understood as insinuating that baptism may be contemned with impunity. So far from excusing this contempt, I hold that it violates the covenant of the Lord. The passage only serves to show, that we must not deem baptism so necessary as to suppose that every one who has lost the opportunity of obtaining it has forthwith perished. By assenting to their fiction, we should condemn all, without exception, whom any accident may have prevented from procuring baptism, how much soever they may have been endued with the faith by which Christ himself is possessed. (IV, 16:26)

The thief on the cross, when converted, became the brother of believers, though he never partook of the Lord's Supper. (IV, 16:31)

9. Fasting and Abstinence as Helpful Spiritual Practices

The remaining part of discipline, which is not, strictly speaking, included in the power of the keys, is when pastors, according to the necessity of the times, exhort the people either to fasting and solemn prayer, ... As the observance of this part of discipline is useful, so it was always used in the Church, even from the days of the apostles. Indeed, the apostles themselves were not its first authors, but borrowed the example from the Law and Prophets. For we there see, that as often as any weighty matter occurred the people were assembled, and supplication and fasting appointed. In this, therefore, the apostles followed a course which was not new to the people of God, and which they foresaw would be useful.... In general, we must hold that whenever any religious controversy arises, which either a council or ecclesiastical tribunal behoves to decide; whenever a minister is to be chosen; whenever, in short, any matter of difficulty and great importance is under consideration: on the other hand, when manifestations of the divine anger appear, as pestilence, war, and famine, the sacred and salutary custom of all ages has been for pastors to exhort the people to public fasting and extraordinary prayer. Should any one refuse to admit the passages which are adduced from the Old Testament, as being less applicable to the Christian Church, it is clear that the apostles also acted thus; although, in regard to prayer, I scarcely think any one will be found to stir the question. Let us, therefore, make some observations on fasting, since very many, not understanding what utility there can be in it, judge it not to be very necessary, while others reject it altogether as superfluous. Where its use is not well known it is easy to fall into superstition. (IV, 12:14)

A holy and lawful fast has three ends in view. We use it either to mortify and subdue the flesh, that it may not wanton, or to prepare the better for prayer and holy meditation; or to give evidence of humbling ourselves before God, when we would confess our guilt before him. The first end is not very often regarded in public fasting, because all have not the same bodily constitution, nor the same state of health, and hence it is more applicable to private fasting. The second end is common to both, for this preparation for prayer is requisite for the whole Church, as well as for each individual member. The same thing may be said of the third. For it sometimes happens that God smites a nation with war or pestilence, or

some kind of calamity. In this common chastisement it behoves the whole people to plead guilty, and confess their guilt. Should the hand of the Lord strike any one in private, then the same thing is to be done by himself alone, or by his family. The thing, indeed, is properly a feeling of the mind. But when the mind is effected as it ought, it cannot but give vent to itself in external manifestation, especially when it tends to the common edification, that all, by openly confessing their sin, may render praise to the divine justice, and by their example mutually encourage each other. (IV, 12:15)

Hence fasting, as it is a sign of humiliation, has a more frequent use in public than among private individuals, although as we have said, it is common to both. In regard, then, to the discipline of which we now treat, whenever supplication is to be made to God on any important occasion, it is befitting to appoint a period for fasting and prayer. Thus when the Christians of Antioch laid hands on Barnabas and Paul, that they might the better recommend their ministry, which was of so great importance, they joined fasting and prayer (Acts 13:3). Thus these two apostles afterwards, when they appointed ministers to churches, were wont to use prayer and fasting (Acts 14:23). In general, the only object which they had in fasting was to render themselves more alert and disencumbered for prayer. We certainly experience that after a full meal the mind does not so rise toward God as to be borne along by an earnest and fervent longing for prayer, and perseverance in prayer. In this sense is to be understood the saying of Luke concerning Anna, that she “served God with fastings and prayers, night and day” (Luke 2:37). For he does not place the worship of God in fasting, but intimates that in this way the holy woman trained herself to assiduity in prayer. Such was the fast of Nehemiah, when with more intense zeal he prayed to God for the deliverance of his people (Neh. 1:4). For this reason Paul says, that married believers do well to abstain for a season (1 Cor. 7:5), that they may have greater freedom for prayer and fasting, when by joining prayer to fasting, by way of help, he reminds us it is of no importance in itself, save in so far as it refers to this end. (IV, 12:16)

On the other hand, when pestilence begins to stalk abroad, or famine or war, or when any other disaster seems to impend over a province and

people (Esther 4:16), then also it is the duty of pastors to exhort the Church to fasting, that she may suppliantly deprecate the Lord's anger.... We read not only that the Israelitish Church, formed and constituted by the word of God, fasted in token of sadness, but the Ninevites also, whose only teaching had been the preaching of Jonah. Why, therefore, should not we do the same? But it is an external ceremony, which, like other ceremonies, terminated in Christ. Nay, in the present day it is an admirable help to believers, as it always was, and a useful admonition to arouse them, lest by too great security and sloth they provoke the Lord more and more when they are chastened by his rod. Accordingly, when our Saviour excuses his apostles for not fasting, he does not say that fasting was abrogated, but reserves it for calamitous times, and conjoins it with mourning. "The days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them" (Mt. 9:35; Luke 5:23). (IV, 12:17)

The first thing is constantly to urge the injunction of Joel, "Rend your heart, and not your garments" (Joel 2:13); that is, to remind the people that fasting in itself is not of great value in the sight of God, unless accompanied with internal affection of the heart, true dissatisfaction with sin and with one's self, true humiliation, and true grief, from the fear of God; nay, that fasting is useful for no other reason than because it is added to these as an inferior help. There is nothing which God more abominates than when men endeavour to cloak themselves by substituting signs and external appearance for integrity of heart. Accordingly, Isaiah inveighs most bitterly against the hypocrisy of the Jews, in thinking that they had satisfied God when they had merely fasted, whatever might be the impiety and impure thoughts which they cherished in their hearts. "Is it such a fast that I have chosen?" (Isa. 58:5) See also what follows. The fast of hypocrites is, therefore, not only useless and superfluous fatigue, but the greatest abomination. (IV, 12:19)

10. Bodily Mortification Approved

In like manner, therefore, as persons accused were anciently wont, in order to excite the commiseration of the judge, to humble themselves suppliantly with long beard, dishevelled hair, and coarse garments, so when we are charged before the divine tribunal, to deprecate his severity in humble

raiment is equally for his glory and the public edification, and useful and salutary to ourselves. And that this was common among the Israelites we may infer from the words of Joel. For when he says, "Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly," &c. (Joel 2:15), he speaks as of things received by common custom. A little before he had said that the people were to be tried for their wickedness, and that the day of judgment was at hand, and he had summoned them as criminals to plead their cause: then he exclaims that they should hasten to sackcloth and ashes, to weeping and fasting; that is, humble themselves before God with external manifestations. The sackcloth and ashes, indeed, were perhaps more suitable for those times, but the assembly, and weeping and fasting, and the like, undoubtedly belong, in an equal degree, to our age, whenever the condition of our affairs so requires. For seeing it is a holy exercise both for men to humble themselves, and confess their humility, why should we in similar necessity use this less than did those of old? (IV, 12:17)

And, first, lest any one defend the monachism of the present day on the ground of the long prescription, it is to be observed, that the ancient mode of living in monasteries was very different. The persons who retired to them were those who wished to train themselves to the greatest austerity and patience. The discipline practiced by the monks then resembled that which the Lacedemonians are said to have used under the laws of Lycurgus, and was even much more rigorous. They slept on the ground, their drink was water, their food bread, herbs, and roots, their chief luxuries oil and pulse. From more delicate food and care of the body they abstained.... By such rudimentary training they prepared themselves for greater offices.... it appears that pious men were wont to prepare for the government of the Church by monastic discipline, that thus they might be more apt and better trained to undertake the important office ... (IV, 13:8)

Another benefit of baptism is, that it shows us our mortification in Christ and new life in him. "Know ye not," says the apostle, "that as many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ, were baptised into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death," that we "should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3, 4). By these words, he not only exhorts us to imitation of Christ, as if he had said, that we are admonished by baptism, in like manner as Christ died, to die to our lusts, and as he rose, to rise to

righteousness; but he traces the matter much higher, that Christ by baptism has made us partakers of his death, ingrafting us into it. And as the twig derives substance and nourishment from the root to which it is attached, so those who receive baptism with true faith truly feel the efficacy of Christ's death in the mortification of their flesh, and the efficacy of his resurrection in the quickening of the Spirit. (IV, 15:5)

11. Self-Denial Practices Not Much Different from Lent

But that there may be no error in the name, let us define what fasting is; for we do not understand by it simply a restrained and sparing use of food, but something else. The life of the pious should be tempered with frugality and sobriety, so as to exhibit, as much as may be, a kind of fasting during the whole course of life. But there is another temporary fast, when we retrench somewhat from our accustomed mode of living, either for one day or a certain period, and prescribe to ourselves a stricter and severer restraint in the use of that ordinary food. This consists in three things—viz. the time, the quality of food, and the sparing use of it. By the time I mean, that while fasting we are to perform those actions for the sake of which the fast is instituted. For example, when a man fasts because of solemn prayer, he should engage in it without having taken food. The quality consists in putting all luxury aside, and, being contented with common and meaner food, so as not to excite our palate by dainties. In regard to quantity, we must eat more lightly and sparingly, only for necessity and not for pleasure. (IV, 12:18)

12. “Puritanical” Legalism and Spiritual Pride

For there always have been persons who, imbued with a false persuasion of absolute holiness, as if they had already become a kind of aërial spirits, spurn the society of all in whom they see that something human still remains. (IV, 1:13)

13. Contraception is Gravely Sinful

I will contend myself with briefly mentioning this, as far as the sense of shame allows to discuss it. It is a horrible thing to pour out seed besides the intercourse of man and woman. Deliberately avoiding the intercourse, so that the seed drops on the ground, is double horrible. For this means that one quenches the hope of his family, and kills the son, which could be expected, before he is born. This wickedness is now as severely as is possible condemned by the Spirit, through Moses, that Onan, as it were, through a violent and untimely birth, tore away the seed of his brother out the womb, and as cruel as shamefully has thrown on the earth. Moreover he thus has, as much as was in his power, tried to destroy a part of the human race. When a woman in some way drives away the seed out the womb, through aids, then this is rightly seen as an unforgivable crime. Onan was guilty of a similar crime, by defiling the earth with his seed, so that Tamar would not receive a future inheritor.

(*Commentary on Genesis* [38:10], translated by John King)

14. The Perpetual Virginity of Mary

Helvidius displayed excessive ignorance in concluding that Mary must have had many sons, because Christ's 'brothers' are sometimes mentioned.

(*Harmony of Matthew, Mark & Luke*, section 39; Geneva, 1562, Vol. II; from *Calvin's Commentaries*, translated by William Pringle, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1949, p. 215; on Matthew 13:55)

[On Matthew 1:25:] The inference he [Helvidius] drew from it was, that Mary remained a virgin no longer than till her first birth, and that afterwards she had other children by her husband ... No just and well-grounded inference can be drawn from these words ... as to what took place after the birth of Christ. He is called 'first-born'; but it is for the sole purpose of informing us that he was born of a virgin ... What took place afterwards the historian does not inform us ... No man will obstinately keep up the argument, except from an extreme fondness for disputation.

(Pringle, *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 107)

Under the word 'brethren' the Hebrews include all cousins and other relations, whatever may be the degree of affinity.

(Pringle, *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 283; *Commentary on John*, [7:3])

15. Mary is Honored and Called “Blessed”

She deserves to be called blessed, for God has accorded her a singular distinction, to prepare his Son for the world, in whom she was spiritually reborn. To this day we cannot enjoy the blessing brought to us in Christ without thinking at the same time of that which God gave us as adornment and honor to Mary, in willing her to be the mother of his only-begotten Son.

(*New Testament Commentaries*, edited by David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1972, Vol. I, p. 32)

Chapter Seven

VII. Agreement on the Sacraments

1. Sacraments Can Only be Instituted by Christ

Accordingly, we most strenuously maintain what we formerly confirmed by invincible argument, that the power of instituting a sacrament belongs to God alone, since a sacrament ought, by the sure promise of God, to raise up and comfort the consciences of believers, which could never receive this assurance from men.... Man, therefore, cannot institute a sacrament, because it is not in the power of man to make such divine mysteries lurk under things so abject. (IV, 19:2)

2. Sacraments Do *Something* In and To Us

They, by sealing it to us, sustain, nourish, confirm, and increase our faith. (IV, 14:7)

The sacraments duly perform their office only when accompanied by the Spirit, the internal Master, whose energy alone penetrates the heart, stirs up the affections, and procures access for the sacraments into our souls. If he is wanting, the sacraments can avail us no more than the sun shining on the eyeballs of the blind, or sounds uttered in the ears of the deaf. Wherefore, in distributing between the Spirit and the sacraments, I ascribe the whole energy to him, and leave only a ministry to them; this ministry, without the agency of the Spirit, is empty and frivolous, but when he acts within, and exerts his power, it is replete with energy.... the sacraments do not avail one iota without the energy of the Holy Spirit; ... in hearts previously taught by that preceptor, there is nothing to prevent the sacraments from strengthening and increasing faith. (IV, 14:9)

Meanwhile, it is easy for the Father of lights, in like manner as he illumines the bodily eye by the rays of the sun, to illumine our minds by the

sacraments, as by a kind of intermediate brightness. (IV, 14:10)

All we say is, that God uses the means and instruments which he sees to be expedient, in order that all things may be subservient to his glory, he being the Lord and disposer of all. Therefore, as by bread and other aliment he feeds our bodies, as by the sun he illumines, and by fire gives warmth to the world, and yet bread, sun, and fire are nothing, save inasmuch as they are instruments under which he dispenses his blessings to us; so in like manner he spiritually nourishes our faith by means of the sacraments, ... (IV, 14:12)

Wherefore, let it be a fixed point, that the office of the sacraments differs not from the word of God; and this is to hold forth and offer Christ to us, and, in him, the treasures of heavenly grace. They confer nothing, and avail nothing, if not received in faith, ... we deny not that God, by the immediate agency of his Spirit, countenances his own ordinance, preventing the administration of the sacraments which he has instituted from being fruitless and vain ... (IV, 14:17)

[S]acraments are ceremonies, by which God is pleased to train his people, first, to excite, cherish, and strengthen faith within ... (IV, 14:19)

There never can be a sacrament without a promise of salvation. (IV, 18:19)

3. Distinction Between Sacraments and Sacramentals

Moreover, it is useful to keep up some distinction between sacraments and other ceremonies, if we would not fall into many absurdities. The apostles prayed on their bended knees; ... (IV, 19:2)

4. Baptism Initiates Us Into the Body of Christ

Baptism is the initiatory sign by which we are admitted to the fellowship of the Church, that being ingrafted into Christ we may be accounted children of God. (IV, 15:1)

The last advantage which our faith receives from baptism is its assuring us not only that we are ingrafted into the death and life of Christ, but so

united to Christ himself as to be partakers of all his blessings.... Paul proves us to be the sons of God, from the fact that we put on Christ in baptism (Gal. 3:27). (IV, 15:6)

Hence he teaches that those whom the Lord has once admitted into favour, and ingrafted into communion with Christ, and received into the fellowship of the Church by baptism, are freed from guilt and condemnation while they persevere in the faith of Christ, though they may be beset by sin and thus bear sin about with them. (IV, 15:12)

For just as circumcision, which was a kind of badge to the Jews, assuring them that they were adopted as the people and family of God, was their first entrance into the Church, while they, in their turn, professed their allegiance to God, so now we are initiated by baptism, so as to be enrolled among his people, and at the same time swear unto his name. Hence it is incontrovertible, that baptism has been substituted for circumcision, and performs the same office. (IV, 16:4)

[C]hildren derive some benefit from their baptism, when, being ingrafted into the body of the Church, ... (IV, 16:9)

In like manner, from his expression in another place, that by baptism we are ingrafted into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 7:13), we infer, that infants, whom he enumerates among his members, are to be baptised, in order that they may not be dissevered from his body. (IV, 16:22)

God, regenerating us in baptism, ingrafts us into the fellowship of his Church, and makes us his by adoption, so we have said that he performs the office of a provident parent, in continually supplying the food by which he may sustain and preserve us in the life to which he has begotten us by his word. (IV, 17:1)

Baptism being a kind of entrance into the Church, an initiation into the faith, ... (IV, 18:19)

5. Catholic Baptism is Valid

Still, as in ancient times, there remained among the Jews certain special privileges of a Church, so in the present day we deny not to the Papists

those vestiges of a Church which the Lord has allowed to remain among them amid the dissipation. When the Lord had once made his covenant with the Jews, it was preserved not so much by them as by its own strength, supported by which it withstood their impiety. Such, then, is the certainty and constancy of the divine goodness, that the covenant of the Lord continued there and his faith could not be obliterated by their perfidy; ... baptism, which, consecrated by his lips, retains its power in spite of human depravity; secondly, He provided by his providence that there should be other remains also to prevent the Church from utterly perishing. But as in pulling down buildings the foundations and ruins are often permitted to remain, so he did not suffer Antichrist either to subvert his Church from its foundation, or to level it with the ground (though, to punish the ingratitude of men who had despised his word, he allowed a fearful shaking and dismembering to take place), but was pleased that amid the devastation the edifice should remain, though half in ruins. (IV, 2:11)

Such in the present day are our Catabaptists, who deny that we are duly baptised, because we were baptised in the Papacy by wicked men and idolaters; hence they furiously insist on anabaptism. Against these absurdities we shall be sufficiently fortified if we reflect that by baptism we were initiated not into the name of any man, but into the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and, therefore, that baptism is not of man, but of God, by whomsoever it may have been administered. Be it that those who baptised us were most ignorant of God and all piety, or were despisers, still they did not baptise us into a fellowship with their ignorance or sacrilege, but into the faith of Jesus Christ, because the name which they invoked was not their own but God's, nor did they baptise into any other name. But if baptism was of God, it certainly included in it the promise of forgiveness of sin, mortification of the flesh, quickening of the Spirit, and communion with Christ. Thus it did not harm the Jews that they were circumcised by impure and apostate priests. It did not nullify the symbol so as to make it necessary to repeat it. It was enough to return to its genuine origin. The objection that baptism ought to be celebrated in the assembly of the godly, does not prove that it loses its whole efficacy because it is partly defective. When we show what ought to be done to keep baptism pure and free from every taint, we do not abolish the institution of

God though idolaters may corrupt it. Circumcision was anciently vitiated by many superstitions, and yet ceased not to be regarded as a symbol of grace; nor did Josiah and Hezekiah, when they assembled out of all Israel those who had revolted from God, call them to be circumcised anew. (IV, 15:16)

6. Baptism Has Some Sort of Relation to Regeneration

[I]t is a kind of sealed instrument by which he assures us that all our sins are so deleted, covered, and effaced, that they will never come into his sight, never be mentioned, never imputed. For it is his will that all who have believed, be baptised for the remission of sins. Hence those who have thought that baptism is nothing else than the badge and mark by which we profess our religion before men, in the same way as soldiers attest their profession by bearing the insignia of their commander, having not attended to what was the principal thing in baptism; and this is, that we are to receive it in connection with the promise, “He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). (IV, 15:1)

In this sense is to be understood the statement of Paul, that “Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word” (Eph. 5:25, 26); and again, “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5). Peter also says that “baptism also doth now save us” (1 Peter 3:21). (IV, 15:2)

We ought to consider that at whatever time we are baptised, we are washed and purified once for the whole of life. Wherefore, as often as we fall, we must recall the remembrance of our baptism, and thus fortify our minds, so as to feel certain and secure of the remission of sins. For though, when once administered, it seems to have passed, it is not abolished by subsequent sins. (IV, 15:3)

... forgiveness, which at our first regeneration we receive by baptism alone
... we are washed from our sins by the blood of Christ. And what is the sign

and evidence of that washing if it be not baptism? We see, then, that that forgiveness has reference to baptism.... if repentance is recommended during the whole of life, the power of baptism ought to have the same extent. (IV, 15:4)

[T]he Lord by this sign promises that a full and entire remission has been made, both of the guilt which was imputed to us, and the penalty incurred by the guilt. (IV, 15:10)

[A]ll who are clothed with the righteousness of Christ are at the same time regenerated by the Spirit, ... we have an earnest of this regeneration in baptism. (IV, 15:12)

Now that the end to which the Lord had regard in the institution of baptism has been explained, it is easy to judge in what way we ought to use and receive it. For inasmuch as it is appointed to elevate, nourish, and confirm our faith, we are to receive it as from the hand of its author, being firmly persuaded that it is himself who speaks to us by means of the sign; that it is himself who washes and purifies us, and effaces the remembrance of our faults; that it is himself who makes us the partakers of his death, destroys the kingdom of Satan, subdues the power of concupiscence, nay, makes us one with himself, that being clothed with him we may be accounted the children of God. (IV, 15:14)

But how, they ask, are infants regenerated, when not possessing a knowledge of either good or evil? We answer, that the work of God, though beyond the reach of our capacity, is not therefore null. Moreover, infants who are to be saved (and that some are saved at this age is certain) must, without question, be previously regenerated by the Lord. For if they bring innate corruption with them from their mother's womb, they must be purified before they can be admitted into the kingdom of God, into which shall not enter anything that defileth (Rev. 21:27). If they are born sinners, as David and Paul affirm, they must either remain unaccepted and hated by God, or be justified. (IV, 16:17)

They object, that baptism is given for the remission of sins. When this is conceded, it strongly supports our view; for, seeing we are born sinners, we stand in need of forgiveness and pardon from the very womb.... If, by

baptism, Christ intends to attest the ablution by which he cleanses his Church, it would seem not equitable to deny this attestation to infants, who are justly deemed part of the Church, seeing they are called heirs of the heavenly kingdom. (IV, 16:22)

God, regenerating us in baptism, ... (IV, 17:1)

7. Validity of Infant Baptism: Analogy of Circumcision

Now, since prior to the institution of baptism, the people of God had circumcision in its stead, let us see how far these two signs differ, and how far they resemble each other. In this way it will appear what analogy there is between them. When the Lord enjoins Abraham to observe circumcision (Gen. 17:10), he premises that he would be a God unto him and to his seed, adding, that in himself was a perfect sufficiency of all things, and that Abraham might reckon on his hand as a fountain of every blessing. These words include the promise of eternal life, as our Saviour interprets when he employs it to prove the immortality and resurrection of believers: "God," says he, "is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Mt. 22:32). Hence, too, Paul, when showing to the Ephesians how great the destruction was from which the Lord had delivered them, seeing that they had not been admitted to the covenant of circumcision, infers that at that time they were aliens from the covenant of promise, without God, and without hope (Eph. 2:12), all these being comprehended in the covenant. Now, the first access to God, the first entrance to immortal life, is the remission of sins. Hence it follows, that this corresponds to the promise of our cleansing in baptism. (IV, 16:3)

Now, if we are to investigate whether or not baptism is justly given to infants, will we not say that the man trifles, or rather is delirious, who would stop short at the element of water, and the external observance, and not allow his mind to rise to the spiritual mystery? If reason is listened to, it will undoubtedly appear that baptism is properly administered to infants as a thing due to them. The Lord did not anciently bestow circumcision upon them without making them partakers of all the things signified by circumcision. He would have deluded his people with mere imposture, had

he quieted them with fallacious symbols: the very idea is shocking. He distinctly declares, that the circumcision of the infant will be instead of a seal of the promise of the covenant. But if the covenant remains firm and fixed, it is no less applicable to the children of Christians in the present day, than to the children of the Jews under the Old Testament.... he is pleased that infants shall be formally admitted to his covenant, what more do we ask? (IV, 16:5)

Scripture gives us a still clearer knowledge of the truth. For it is most evident that the covenant, which the Lord once made with Abraham, is not less applicable to Christians now than it was anciently to the Jewish people, and therefore that word has no less reference to Christians than to Jews. Unless, indeed, we imagine that Christ, by his advent, diminished, or curtailed the grace of the Father—an idea not free from execrable blasphemy. Wherefore, both the children of the Jews, because, when made heirs of that covenant, they were separated from the heathen, were called a holy seed, and for the same reason the children of Christians, or those who have only one believing parent, are called holy, and, by the testimony of the apostle, differ from the impure seed of idolaters. Then, since the Lord, immediately after the covenant was made with Abraham, ordered it to be sealed in infants by an outward sacrament, how can it be said that Christians are not to attest it in the present day, and seal it in their children? (IV, 16:6)

Certainly, if circumcision was a literal sign, the same view must be taken of baptism, since, in the second chapter to the Colossians, the apostle makes the one to be not a whit more spiritual than the other. For he says that in Christ we “are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ.” In explanation of his sentiment he immediately adds, that we are “buried with him in baptism.” What do these words mean, but just that the truth and completion of baptism is the truth and completion of circumcision, since they represent one thing? For his object is to show that baptism is the same thing to Christians that circumcision formerly was to the Jews. (IV, 16:11)

8. Infant Baptism: Analogy of Jesus Welcoming Children

Hence our Lord Jesus Christ, to give an example from which the world might learn that he had come to enlarge rather than to limit the grace of the Father, kindly takes the little children in his arms, and rebukes his disciples for attempting to prevent them from, coming (Mt. 19:13), because they were keeping those to whom the kingdom of heaven belonged away from him, through whom alone there is access to heaven. But it will be asked, What resemblance is there between baptism and our Saviour embracing little children? He is not said to have baptised, but to have received, embraced, and blessed them; and, therefore, if we would imitate his example, we must give infants the benefit of our prayers, not baptise them. But let us attend to the act of our Saviour a little more carefully than these men do. For we must not lightly overlook the fact, that our Saviour, in ordering little children to be brought to him, adds the reason, “of such is the kingdom of heaven.” And he afterwards testifies his good-will by act, when he embraces them, and with prayer and benediction commends them to his Father. If it is right that children should be brought to Christ, why should they not be admitted to baptism, the symbol of our communion and fellowship with Christ? If the kingdom of heaven is theirs, why should they be denied the sign by which access, as it were, is opened to the Church, that being admitted into it they may be enrolled among the heirs of the heavenly kingdom? (IV, 16:7)

9. Baptismal Immersion is Not Strictly Necessary

Whether the person baptised is to be wholly immersed, and that whether once or thrice, or whether he is only to be sprinkled with water, is not of the least consequence: churches should be at liberty to adopt either, according to the diversity of climates, although it is evident that the term *baptise* means to immerse, and that this was the form used by the primitive Church. (IV, 15:19)

10. The Eucharist is Related to Salvation in Some Sense

The body which was once offered for our salvation we are enjoined to take and eat, that, while we see ourselves made partakers of it, we may safely conclude that the virtue of that death will be efficacious in us. Hence he terms the cup the covenant in his blood. (IV, 17:1)

To all these things we have a complete attestation in this sacrament, enabling us certainly to conclude that they are as truly exhibited to us as if Christ were placed in bodily presence before our view, or handled by our hands.... As bread nourishes, sustains, and protects our bodily life, so the body of Christ is the only food to invigorate and keep alive the soul.... to foster, refresh, strengthen, and exhilarate. (IV, 17:3)

... nourishing us unto life eternal, ... (IV, 17:4)

[H]e gave himself to be crucified for the redemption of the world; and he gives himself daily, when in the word of the gospel he offers himself to be partaken by us, inasmuch as he was crucified, when he seals that offer by the sacred mystery of the Supper, and when he accomplishes inwardly what he externally designates.... That Christ is the bread of life by which believers are nourished unto eternal life, ... For there are some who define the eating of the flesh of Christ, and the drinking of his blood, to be, in one word, nothing more than believing in Christ himself. But Christ seems to me to have intended to teach something more express and more sublime in that noble discourse, in which he recommends the eating of his flesh—viz. that we are quickened by the true partaking of him, which he designated by the terms eating and drinking, lest any one should suppose that the life which we obtain from him is obtained by simple knowledge. For as it is not the sight but the eating of bread that gives nourishment to the body, so the soul must partake of Christ truly and thoroughly, that by his energy it may grow up into spiritual life.... But there is this difference between their mode of speaking and mine. According to them, to eat is merely to believe; while I maintain that the flesh of Christ is eaten by believing, because it is made ours by faith, and that that eating is the effect and fruit of faith; ... by virtue of true communication with him, his life passes into us and becomes ours, just as bread when taken for food gives vigour to the body. (IV, 17:5)

I am not satisfied with the view of those who, while acknowledging that we have some kind of communion with Christ, only make us partakers of the

Spirit, omitting all mention of flesh and blood. As if it were said to no purpose at all, that his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed; that we have no life unless we eat that flesh and drink that blood; and so forth.... For I shall have a longer discussion with these hyperbolical doctors, who, according to their gross ideas, fabricate an absurd mode of eating and drinking, and transfigure Christ, after divesting him of his flesh, into a phantom: ... (IV, 17:7)

Nay, the very flesh in which he resides he makes vivifying to us, that by partaking of it we may feed for immortality. "I," says he, "am that bread of life;" "I am the living bread which came down from heaven;" "And the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:48, 51).... by this food believers are reared to eternal life. The pious, therefore, have admirable comfort in this, that they now find life in their own flesh. (IV, 17:8)

The flesh of Christ, ... is properly said to be life-giving, as it is pervaded with the fulness of life for the purpose of transmitting it to us.... the flesh of Christ is like a rich and inexhaustible fountain, which transfuses into us the life flowing forth from the Godhead into itself. Now, who sees not that the communion of the flesh and blood of Christ is necessary to all who aspire to the heavenly life? Hence those passages of the apostle: The Church is the "body" of Christ; his "fulness." He is "the head," "from whence the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth," "maketh increase of the body" (Eph. 1:23; 4:15, 16). Our bodies are the "members of Christ" (1 Cor. 6:15). We perceive that all these things cannot possibly take place unless he adheres to us wholly in body and spirit. But the very close connection which unites us to his flesh, he illustrated with still more splendid epithets, when he said that we "are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (Eph. 5:30). At length, to testify that the matter is too high for utterance, he concludes with exclaiming, "This is a great mystery" (Eph. 5:32). It were, therefore, extreme infatuation not to acknowledge the communion of believers with the body and blood of the Lord, a communion which the apostle declares to be so great, that he chooses rather to marvel at it than to explain it. (IV, 17:9)

That sacred communion of flesh and blood by which Christ transfuses his life into us, just as if it penetrated our bones and marrow, he testifies and seals in the Supper, and that not by presenting a vain or empty sign, but by there exerting an efficacy of the Spirit by which he fulfils what he promises. (IV, 17:10)

And, indeed, I see not how any one can expect to have redemption and righteousness in the cross of Christ, and life in his death, without trusting first of all to true communion with Christ himself. Those blessings could not reach us, did not Christ previously make himself ours. I say then, that in the mystery of the Supper, by the symbols of bread and wine, Christ, his body and his blood, are truly exhibited to us, that in them he fulfilled all obedience, in order to procure righteousness for us—first that we might become one body with him; and, secondly, that being made partakers of his substance, we might feel the result of this fact in the participation of all his blessings. (IV, 17:11)

[T]he true and substantial communication of the body and blood of the Lord, ... are received not by the imagination or intellect merely, but are enjoyed in reality as the food of eternal life. (IV, 17:19)

Such, I say, is the corporeal presence which the nature of the sacrament requires, and which we say is here displayed in such power and efficacy, that it not only gives our minds undoubted assurance of eternal life, but also secures the immortality of our flesh, since it is now quickened by his immortal flesh, and in a manner shines in his immortality. (IV, 17:32)

For the Lord there communicates his body so that he may become altogether one with us, and we with him. Moreover, since he has only one body of which he makes us all to be partakers, we must necessarily, by this participation, all become one body. (IV, 17:38)

11. Communion Ought to be at Least a Weekly Observance

All this mass of ceremonies being abandoned, the sacrament might be celebrated in the most becoming manner, if it were dispensed to the Church very frequently, at least once a-week. (IV, 17:43)

What we have hitherto said of the sacrament, abundantly shows that it was not instituted to be received once a-year and that perfunctorily (as is now commonly the custom); but that all Christians might have it in frequent use, ... That such was the practice of the Apostolic Church, we are informed by Luke in the Acts, when he says, that “they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). Thus we ought always to provide that no meeting of the Church is held without the word, prayer, the dispensation of the Supper, and alms. (IV, 17:44)

By these enactments, holy men wished to retain and ensure the use of frequent communion, as handed down by the apostles themselves; ... (IV, 17:45)

Each week, at least, the table of the Lord ought to have been spread for the company of Christians, and the promises declared on which we might then spiritually feed. (IV, 17:46)

12. Partaking of the Eucharist Presupposes Doctrinal Unity

... by partaking of the Lord’s Supper profess unity in true doctrine and charity, ... (IV, 1:7)

For men of this description, who without any spark of faith, without any zeal for charity, rush forward like swine to seize the Lord’s Supper, do not at all discern the Lord’s body. For, inasmuch as they do not believe that body to be their life, they put every possible affront upon it, stripping it of all its dignity, and profane and contaminate it by so receiving; inasmuch as while alienated and estranged from their brethren, they dare to mingle the sacred symbol of Christ’s body with their dissensions. No thanks to them if the body of Christ is not rent and torn to pieces. Wherefore they are justly held guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, which, with sacrilegious impiety, they so vilely pollute. By this unworthy eating, they bring judgment on themselves. For while they have no faith in Christ, yet, by receiving the sacrament, they profess to place their salvation only in him, and abjure all other confidence. Wherefore they themselves are their own

accusers; they bear witness against themselves; they seal their own condemnation. (IV, 17:40)

13. Partaking of the Eucharist in Grave Sin is Harmful

For, just as corporeal food, when received into a stomach subject to morbid humours, becomes itself vitiated and corrupted, and rather hurts than nourishes, so this spiritual food also, if given to a soul polluted with malice and wickedness, plunges it into greater ruin, not indeed by any defect in the food, but because to the “defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure” (Titus 1:15), however much it may be sanctified by the blessing of the Lord. For, as Paul says, “Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord;” “eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body” (1 Cor. 11:27, 29). (IV, 17:40)

14. Holy Ordination Can Possibly be Called a Sacrament

I speak of those which were instituted for the use of the whole Church. For the laying on of hands, by which the ministers of the Church are initiated into their office, though I have no objection to its being called a sacrament, I do not number among ordinary sacraments. (IV, 14:20)

In regard to the true office of presbyter, which was recommended to us by the lips of Christ, I willingly give it that place. For in it there is a ceremony which, first, is taken from the Scriptures; and, secondly, is declared by Paul to be not empty or superfluous, but to be a faithful symbol of spiritual grace (1 Tim. 4:14).... it is not ordinary or common to all believers, but is a special rite for a certain function.... this honour is attributed to the Christian ministry, ... Christ ordered dispensers of his gospel and his sacred mysteries to be ordained, ... (IV, 19:28)

There remains the laying on of hands, ... I admit it to be a sacrament in true and legitimate ordination, ... (IV, 19:31)

15. Approximation of Catholic Sacrament of Confirmation

The charge of absurdity with which they attempt to stigmatise it, we thus dispose of. If those on whom the Lord has bestowed his election, after receiving the sign of regeneration, depart this life before they become adults, he, by the incomprehensible energy of his Spirit, renews them in the way which he alone sees to be expedient. Should they reach an age when they can be instructed in the meaning of baptism, they will thereby be animated to greater zeal for renovation, the badge of which they will learn that they received in earliest infancy, in order that they might aspire to it during their whole lives. (IV, 16:21)

It was anciently customary for the children of Christians, after they had grown up, to appear before the bishop to fulfil that duty which was required of such adults as presented themselves for baptism. These sat among the catechumens until they were duly instructed in the mysteries of the faith, and could make a confession of it before bishop and people. The infants, therefore, who had been initiated by baptism, not having then given a confession of faith to the Church, were again, toward the end of their boyhood, or on adolescence, brought forward by their parents, and were examined by the bishop in terms of the Catechism which was then in common use. In order that this act, which otherwise justly required to be grave and holy, might have more reverence and dignity, the ceremony of laying on of hands was also used. Thus the boy, on his faith being approved, was dismissed with a solemn blessing. Ancient writers often make mention of this custom.... This laying on of hands, which is done simply by way of benediction, I commend, and would like to see restored to its pure use in the present day. (IV, 19:4)

But what did the apostles do? Luke narrates (Acts 8:15, 17), that the apostles who were at Jerusalem, when they heard that Samaria had received the word of God, sent thither Peter and John, that Peter and John prayed for the Samaritans, that they might receive the Holy Spirit, who had not yet come upon any of them, they having only been baptised in the name of Jesus; that after prayer they laid their hands upon them, and that

by this laying on of hands the Samaritans received the Holy Spirit. Luke repeatedly mentions this laying on of hands. I hear what the apostles did, that is, they faithfully executed their ministry. It pleased the Lord that those visible and admirable gifts of the Holy Spirit, which he then poured out upon his people, should be administered and distributed by his apostles by the laying on of hands. (IV, 19:6)

16. Approximation of the Catholic Sacrament of Penance

Therefore, in the communion of saints our sins are constantly forgiven by the ministry of the Church, when presbyters or bishops, to whom the office has been committed, confirm pious consciences, in the hope of pardon and forgiveness by the promises of the gospel, and that as well in public as in private, as the case requires. (IV, 1:22)

I will speak briefly of the rite of the early Church, ... By the order observed in public repentance, those who had performed the satisfactions imposed upon them were reconciled by the formal laying on of hands. This was the symbol of absolution by which the sinner himself regained his confidence of pardon before God, and the Church was admonished to lay aside the remembrance of the offence, and kindly receive him into favour.... I consider that ancient observance of which Cyprian speaks to have been holy and salutary to the Church, and I could wish it restored in the present day. (IV, 19:14)

17. Approximation of the Catholic Sacrament of Anointing

Mark relates that the apostles, on their first mission, agreeably to the command which they had received of the Lord, raised the dead, cast out devils, cleansed lepers, healed the sick, and, in healing, used oil. He says, they “anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them” (Mark 6:13). To this James referred when he ordered the presbyters of the Church to be called to anoint the sick. That no deeper mystery lay under this ceremony will easily be perceived by those who consider how great liberty both our Lord and his apostles used in those external things. Our

Lord, when about to give sight to the blind man, spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle; some he cured by a touch, others by a word. In like manner the apostles cured some diseases by word only, others by touch, others by anointing. But it is probable that neither this anointing nor any of the other things were used at random. I admit this; not, however, that they were instruments of the cure, but only symbols to remind the ignorant whence this great virtue proceeded, and prevent them from ascribing the praise to the apostles. (IV, 19:18)

The Lord, doubtless, is present with his people in all ages, and cures their sicknesses as often as there is need, not less than formerly ... (IV, 19:19)¹²

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Notes

[←1]

RCV Revised Calvin Version

[←2]

RCV Revised Calvin Version

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RCV Revised Calvin Version

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Armstrong, D. (2010). [Biblical Catholic Answers for John Calvin](#) (pp. 1–388). Dave Armstrong.